

10-PAGE BLOWOUT ON PS4'S BIGGEST GAME

PLAY



The amazing story behind Jonathan Blow's The Witness



50 HOT NEW VITA GAMES

GAME OF THE YEAR

UNCHARTED 4

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GAME YOUR PS4 WAS BUILT TO PLAY

SEASONS PASSED

How have the biggest games on PlayStation 4 evolved since launch?

"MY LIFE WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED"
The social media mistake that led to ADR1FT

+ THE DIVISION PARAGON VAMPIR THE SURGE DUNGEONS 2 MYRIAD DANGEROUS GOLF INSURGENCY: SANDSTORM KING OF FIGHTERS XIV HOMEFRONT: THE REVOLUTION LEGO STAR WARS UFC 2 & MORE!

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ISSUE 268

REPUBLIQUE

KEEP HOPE ALIVE

OUT NOW ON PLAYSTATION®4



PS4

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PS4 PS3 Vita PSN

Welcome **PLAY**

The UK's only independent PlayStation magazine

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How Naughty Dog's iconic
hero will bow out in style

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FINALLY HERE!

DRAKE? DRAAAAAAAKE!



I'M NOT ENTIRELY sure that I'm ready to say goodbye to Nate. If Naughty Dog *does* go through with killing off the most iconic non-bandicoot hero in PlayStation

history, it'll leave a handsome-bastard-shaped hole in my heart, but I suppose I'd rather deal with that than see poor Drake milked to the point where I got sick of seeing him. While his departure wouldn't close the door on the series (there are plenty of great characters already in the universe who could take the spotlight – how cool would it be to dive into a younger Sully's adventures?), it *would* potentially free up the team to make something different, and last time that happened, we got *The Last Of Us*. Seems like a pretty good plan to me.

We've seen great things come out of studios leaving their old IPs behind a few times already this generation. Guerrilla's first non-*Killzone* game, *Horizon Zero Dawn*, is one of the most impressive games we've seen; Techland moved away from *Dead Island* (if perhaps not through choice) to deliver its best game yet in *Dying Light*; Joe Danger, Hello Games' friendly neighbourhood stuntman, has been allowed to kick back while the small team creates a practically infinite universe in *No Man's Sky*. Opportunities like this to see what devs can achieve away from the trappings of the series for which they are known are always interesting, especially when you're talking about a studio of Naughty Dog's calibre.

But enough about what will happen next – we've got the massively exciting prospect of Drake's final voyage to savour first, and we've collated everything you need to know in preparation for what is undoubtedly the most important game on PS4 so far. So farewell, Drake. I'll miss ya buddy, but it's been a ride that I will never forget.

Enjoy the issue and I'll see you online...

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Tom Clancy's *The Division*

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The background image is the cover art for the video game Uncharted 4: A Thief's End. It depicts the two main characters, Nathan Drake and Sully, from behind, looking out over a lush, tropical jungle. In the distance, a village with wooden houses is built into the side of a steep, misty mountain. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise.

06

**UNCHARTED 4:
A THIEF'S END**

Gear up for PS4's most
exciting adventure yet

PLAY
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Seeking Fortune

The Secrets Of Uncharted 4

Investigating the key locations and characters that will define Nathan Drake's journey to glory or ruin



Naughty Dog has done it again. After proving that it could get more out of the PS3 than any other studio, the developer has now rocked up with new footage of *Uncharted 4* that blows everything else on PS4 out of the water. *The Order: 1886* set the early benchmark for what the console was capable of; *A Thief's End* will comprehensively smash it, and that's no small feat given that *Uncharted 4* is being positioned as a less linear game than both Ready At Dawn's PS4 debut, and *Uncharted*'s own predecessors.

But, outside of the fact that it will look fantastic, what can we expect from *Uncharted 4*? Well, there will certainly be more of what made us fall in love with the series in the first place. We've got the treasure hunting, globe-trotting adventure – this time it's a search for pirate booty that will take us through Europe, Africa, Madagascar and perhaps a few other yet-to-be-revealed locations. Then there are the spectacular set-pieces: we've seen Drake panicking in the back of a Jeep that's about to plummet over the edge of a huge waterfall, hanging off the side of a bridge while desperately clutching a grapple hook attached to a speeding truck, leaping between

vehicles during an epic gunfight in the Madagascan countryside, and speeding through docklands on the back of a motorcycle.

What we've also seen, though, are hints that this entry in the series will go places the other *Uncharted* games haven't, in more ways than one. That means new locations, new characters, new mechanics, a new approach to level design, and a tone that heralds an intention to give us a deeper look at what makes Nate and his close allies tick (more on all those things in the pages to come).

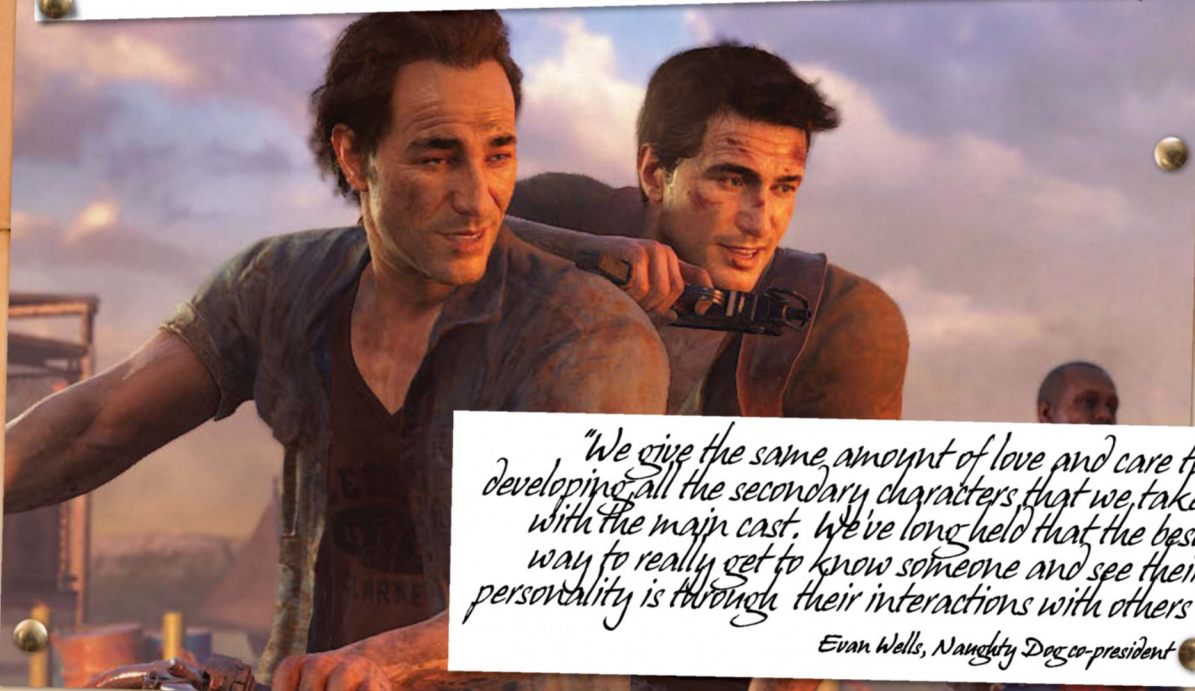
Yet, for everything about the game that makes it feel like a new beginning, it also has the air of something that is coming to an end. This is a story at least in part about Nathan Drake's inability to leave his old life behind, about his addiction to a life of danger and playing the role of adventurer, even at the expense of his loved ones. It's a theme that's been threaded throughout the tapestry that forms the backdrop for Naughty Dog's final *Uncharted* game. Now, in coming to the fore of Nathan Drake's story, it has to reach its culmination. Can there really be any way out of the impasse of the man unable to feel alive unless his life is at threat other than death? This is 'A Thief's End', after all...





Liars, Cheats & Thieves

What do we know about the new characters being introduced in *Uncharted 4*, how does this affect our familiar heroes, and who can really be trusted?



"We give the same amount of love and care to developing all the secondary characters that we take with the main cast. We've long held that the best way to really get to know someone and see their personality is through their interactions with others"

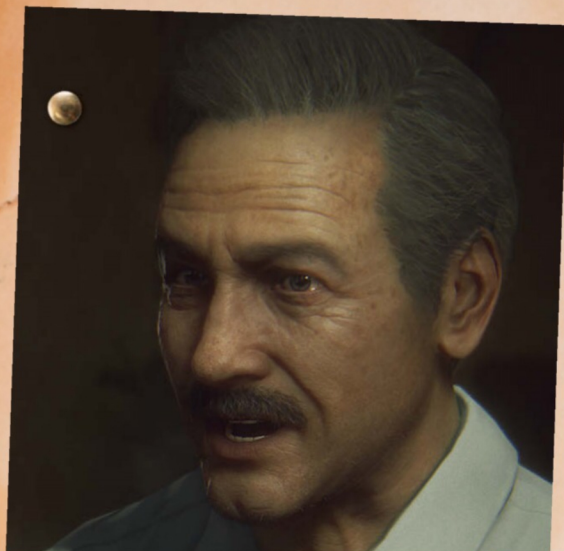
Evan Wells, Naughty Dog co-president

Sam Drake

We had been led to believe that Nate has no family in previous games, but in *Uncharted 4*, we find out that's not the case, as Nate's brother Sam turns up to rope the ex-adventurer into a caper to search for the treasure they've had their eyes on since they were kids. Sam's insistence that "these guys don't get it" – presumably referring to Elena and Sully – suggests that there could be some tension between Sam and Nate's longtime allies. Can he be trusted? We're not entirely sure...

Nathan Drake

After three games and a Vita spin-off, we all know Nathan Drake pretty well by now, but it seems like we will get a bit more backstory on his early years as we learn about his relationship with his brother Sam. We may also see a more tragic side to a man who is struggling to come to terms with living a 'normal' life. What we really want to know, of course, is just what game's subtitle 'A Thief's End' means for Nate in *Uncharted 4*. Could this really be the end of PlayStation's biggest icon?



Victor Sullivan

There's one man Nate can always count on and that's Sully, who is at Nate's side once again in *Uncharted 4*. From what we've seen, we know that Sully will be one of the game's companion characters, along with Sam, although he initially seems reluctant for Nate to get back into the treasure-hunting game. Sully has had a run-in with antagonist, and new character, Nadine Ross in the past.



Elena Fisher

All we really know about Elena's role in *Uncharted 4* so far is that she seems upset with Nate, and who can blame her? Both of them have come close to death on multiple occasions over the course of their adventures, which is why Nate promised that he would leave that life behind. It seems that Nate has broken his promise to Elena, unable to resist the lure of hunting treasure.



Nadine Ross

Nadine is the owner of a South African private military firm called Shoreline. She appears to be working with (or perhaps for) Rafe Adler to try and obtain an unnamed artifact, putting her into conflict with Drake and his friends. She is also a badass, as evidenced by the fact that we've seen her kicking the crap out of Nate on a couple of occasions.

Rafe Adler

Other than that he is working with Nadine, and by association, against the Drakes, we know very little about Rafe. "Last I checked, we're all a bunch of thieves, digging around where we shouldn't," we hear him tell Drake in a recent trailer, suggesting that this isn't his first treasure hunt. We just hope that he is a more interesting villain, a series first.



The Mystery Man

Who is this mystery man that Naughty Dog has introduced us to? The only line we've heard him speak is, "So, are you ready to seek your fortune?" He appears to be speaking to Nate after releasing him from prison, suggesting that he is likely an ally. Interestingly, he looks a bit like Sam. Could he be his father? Does that mean that Nate and Sam are half-brothers, or completely unrelated? We won't know until we can say definitively who this mystery man is.

Charting New Territory

How Uncharted 4 will change the way you play as Naughty Dog seeks to make this the best Uncharted yet

Come Out Swinging

Surely the coolest addition to Nathan Drake's repertoire of moves is the ability to swing from a grapple hook, enabling him to replicate Indiana Jones' daring swings across otherwise deadly gaps using his trademark whip. Playing around with the grapple hook in the multiplayer beta confirms that your swing is controllable, meaning you can freely aim your swings at particular ledges or enemies. The latter is particularly important because we want to replicate that moment from *Uncharted 4*'s original gameplay reveal – where Nate leaped from a rope straight into a flying superman punch and then caught the dropped assault rifle of the recipient of that punch in mid-air as he dropped to the floor – as often as possible.



The Wetter, The Better

For the first time in the *Uncharted* series, we will be able to explore underwater areas in *Uncharted 4*. Now, we don't want underwater bits shoehorned into the game every half an hour just because underwater swimming is now a thing you can do, but that's not something we can imagine a skilled developer such as Naughty Dog doing. Instead, hopefully we'll see one or two fun and inventive sections based around exploring submerged pirate wreckages or some other such sub-aquatic activity.



Pass The Piton

Offering a new element to climbing is the piton. This new piece of kit can be jammed into soft pieces of rock by Drake in order to create new handholds (the never-ending circle of ideas and mechanics pinched and shared by the *Uncharted* series and *Tomb Raider* continues). We're hoping this will add a bit of complexity to climbing sections, requiring us to exercise our brains a little more. The fact that Naughty Dog has suggested you can take multiple routes while climbing and that slips are triggered by physics-based calculations – the angle of your jump, the solidity of the handhold, and so on – gives us confidence that there will indeed be a lot more to climbing in *Uncharted 4*.

"Ideally, you take control away from the player as little as possible so they feel as engaged as they can with what's going on"

Josh Scherr, lead writer on Uncharted 4

Choose Your Own Adventure

A mechanic new to *Uncharted* was introduced in a scene that features Nate and Sam. In that scene, a number of dialogue options pop up, giving the player the opportunity to choose which story Drake tells his brother. The idea that we might actually have an impact on how the story progresses seems unlikely, but they must have *some* kind of effect.

- I found El Dorado...
- I explored Shambhala...
- I discovered Iram of the Pillars...



Behind The Wheel

Save for a solitary jet-ski section in the original *Uncharted*, Naughty Dog has preferred to let you ride shotgun throughout the course of the series. That's all set to change in *Uncharted 4*. We know that there's an intense set-piece where we will control a jeep as Nate is chased by an armoured vehicle through Madagascan streets, and we've had a quick peep at what appears to be Nathan Drake at the helm of a boat. Expect there to be at least a couple of vehicle sections in *A Thief's End*, then, though there could be a lot more.



Duck and Move

If there's one thing we would change about the *Uncharted* series, it is the game's combat and, thankfully, it would seem that Naughty Dog is in agreement. Outside of set-pieces, the studio is suggesting that combat areas will be far more open than in the past and, therefore, more encouraging of player creativity. The idea is that you keep yourself on the move, climbing up and down ledges, sneaking around in the bushes, and running from enemy fire when necessary. In essence, that means that you're using the environment itself as a weapon, constantly repositioning yourself to turn the tide in your favour. That makes climbing, gunplay, melee, and stealth part of a repertoire of tools for you to use as you see fit.

Hands-On With Uncharted 4

How Uncharted 4's multiplayer is taking cues from *The Last Of Us* and why that's making it better than ever



Conditioned by our experience with past *Uncharted* games, our initial instinct was to turn our noses up at *Uncharted 4*'s multiplayer mode, waving it off as a half-hearted attempt to discourage people from trading in the game once they are done with the main event – the single-player campaign.

Then we remembered *The Last Of Us*. There are few who would argue against single-player being what Naughty Dog does best, but, with *The Last Of Us*, the developer took a huge leap forward from the functional but uninspiring multiplayer modes of *Uncharted 2* and *Uncharted 3* to prove that it can deliver a truly compelling multiplayer experience that can hold the attention in the long run. In that context, we're more interested in *Uncharted 4*'s multiplayer mode than we would have been.

Given that *The Last Of Us* represents the studio's best multiplayer mode, it is unsurprising to see that a few ideas from that game have been taken over into *Uncharted 4*. Let's start with the downing system. After taking a few hits, you won't instantly be killed, but 'downed' instead. This means you drop to all fours and are able to crawl slowly as a health gradually drains. Your attacker can finish you off with a swift kick or a few more shots. Alternatively, if an ally gets to you first, they can revive you from your downed state.

The down system adds a tantalising risk-versus-reward element to combat. Do you dash in to finish off a downed opponent that's skulked off behind cover and risk running in to a horde of enemies, or do you hold off and hope that no one gets to them in time, or, better yet, pick off anyone that *does* rock up to assist their ally?

More important than that, though, is the way that the system encourages you to play as a team. Aside from the fact that wading into a



Playing With Class

We break down some of Uncharted 4's key multiplayer roles and builds

firefight with backup makes it far more likely that you will come out on top, sticking together is important in that it allows you to protect allies that have been downed, grabbing counter kills as enemies rush in to try and finish off their targets and reviving your teammates to deny your opponents any extra points.

Fittingly for an *Uncharted* game, acts of heroics are still possible – the game's climbing mechanics allow you to swiftly loop around when two teams are encamped in a firefight and surprise them from behind, but this relies on the fact that the game encourages the kind of team-based play that makes that scenario possible.

"With the PlayStation 4 we can do a bunch of cool stuff with AI that we couldn't do on the PlayStation 3. We held onto a couple of nuggets as we were prototyping ideas and those nuggets are now the Sidekicks" Robert Cogburn, lead game designer on multiplayer

Transposing the down system into *Uncharted* multiplayer has done it a world of good, then, making it a far more strategic and engaging experience. In other ways, though, we sense that the game could struggle to emulate the title that's so clearly influenced it.

Part of what makes *The Last Of Us*' multiplayer work so well is that the fundamentals of the game are all there – the combat, the stealth and, perhaps most importantly, the scavenging. The need to search for scarce resources that can be used to craft items to turn the battle in your favour adds another element of risk and reward to the game and is both thematically and mechanically consistent with the single-player component of the game.

It's far harder to find that consistency with *Uncharted*. You can't, for example, shove the set-pieces that form one of the key pillars of

Uncharted into multiplayer. Instead, Naughty Dog has opted to offer a simplified version of *The Last Of Us*' crafting system whereby points earned for kills or for treasure picked up in the map are converted to cash that you can use to buy special abilities (called 'Mysticals'), AI-controlled Sidekicks, or upgrade your equipment.

At this early stage, we're not particularly sold on it. It feels like it leans towards being a *Call Of Duty* Killstreak-style reward that you spend little time thinking about, rather than being a fundamental part of gameplay as in *The Last Of Us*, where resources and what you can do with them are always on your mind.

Having said that, though, it's clear that some of the game's Mysticals are tailored towards being useful in game modes that we haven't been able to play yet – *Indra's Eternity*, a Mystical that slows down anyone in its range seems like it would be particularly good in an objective-based mode, for example. Once players start getting their heads around what abilities are most useful in particular scenarios, they could reveal themselves to be far more intriguing in terms of their tactical potential.

What we've played of *Uncharted 4*'s multiplayer leads us to believe that it will be the best in the *Uncharted* series, but can it reach or go beyond the level of quality the studio achieved with *The Last Of Us*? That's going to depend on whether other modes and maps can bring something out of the game's systems that we haven't yet seen.



Assault

An all-rounder class. You are armed with an AK-47 and grenades and have an RPG and a Brute Sidekick as purchasables. The latter's ability to absorb damage is particularly useful.

Support

Favouring mid-to-long-range encounters, the support acts as a medic – as well as having the RevivePak, the Support can call on the Saviour Sidekick to revive teammates.



Charger

As the name suggests, the Charger's aim is to get up close and personal with the Spezzotti 12 Gauge shotgun. The Hunter Sidekick can be called in to hold enemies for you to finish off.

Recon

This is *Uncharted 4*'s sniper class. A mine helps to protect your sniping spots when you're picking off enemies with the M24 and a the Sniper Sidekick can be called in to join you.

Your Map To Adventure

"Every Uncharted game continues to push for this sense of adventure and wonder - it's about exploring places, right? Literally going off the map, going uncharted, but keeping you on the stick"

Ricky Cambier, lead designer on Uncharted 4

New York

We've seen a young Nathan Drake standing alongside his brother Sam at the foot of a bridge that looked very much like Manhattan Bridge in New York. Whether we will actually get to *play* as a young Drake isn't clear, but we wouldn't be surprised to see an *Uncharted* 3-style flashback that helps to establish Nate and Sam's relationship. The fact that it is implied that the pair have been searching for whatever treasure it is they are chasing down in *Uncharted 4* since they were kids only makes it more likely.



Africa

It's clear from this image that we're going to visit Africa, but as to where in Africa, we can't be sure. There are a couple of clues about where this *might* be, however. The mountain in the image doesn't look unlike Ol Donyo Sabuk in Kenya which, interestingly, is near the spectacular Fourteen Falls waterfall, which *could* be the waterfall we saw Drake about to fall off of in *Uncharted 4*'s recent trailer. Saying that, Africa is a very big place, so we may well be wrong. South Africa is another strong candidate given that we know that antagonist Nadine Ross runs a security company based in South Africa.





Europe

This snowy scene is almost certainly in Europe and likely close to our shores. How do we know that?

Notice the Celtic style cross on the gravestone in the background? That leads us to speculate that, along with the cold climate, we're likely looking at a location in Scotland or Ireland. Henry Every, the pirate whose trail Drake will be following in the game (at least, for a time) was said to have unloaded some treasure in Ireland in 1696, so it seems possible that this scene sees Drake and Sam searching for whatever it was that Every unloaded there.



Antananarivo

You know that spectacular scene where Drake and Sully fight their way through a market before getting embroiled in a high-octane car chase? Well, there was a key clue to be spotted there. On the number plate of the jeep Nate and Sully are riding in is a Madagascan flag, meaning this scene almost certainly takes place in a Madagascan town. We put our money on the capital Antananarivo, which is hilly enough to fit with what we've seen in that particular set-piece. We suspect that the market the duo fight there way through is Antananarivo's Analakely market and that the staircase Drake ends up driving down is an interpretation of one of the cities' two largest staircases located at Antaninarenina and Ambondrona.



Madagascar

The jungle-covered coastal location that offered us our first look at *Uncharted 4* is almost certainly Madagascar. We know this because Drake is hunting for the pirate colony of Libertatia, following the trail of the pirate Henry Every. According to legend, the pirate utopia of Libertatia was founded in the late 17th century, somewhere in Madagascar. Hence why we're convinced that this is the jungle location we've seen Nate doing his thing in.



VITA LIVES!



It might feel like mainstream support for Sony's handheld powerhouse has dried up, but that doesn't mean that there aren't still great games coming to the platform. In fact, here are 50 awesome new titles that you can look forward to playing this year...



1 DIGIMON WORLD: NEXT ORDER

It might be the closest thing we'll ever have to *Pokémon* on a PlayStation platform but even so, *Digimon* always has been and always will be a cheap knockoff version of the real thing. Still, that's as close as we will ever get, so we'll have to take it... and by all accounts, this is actually going to be pretty good, just like *Digimon World* on PSone back in the day. Go on, then...



PS VITA



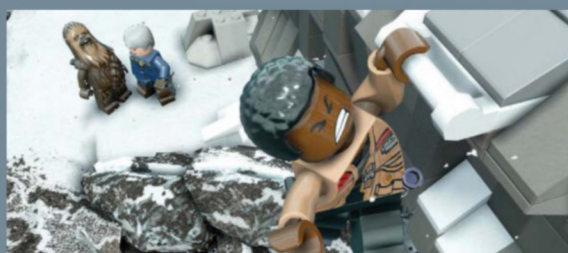
2 WORLD OF FINAL FANTASY

Chibi versions of all your favourite *FF* characters come together in this, a Greatest Hits album of all Square's best-loved heroes and heroines. *Record Keeper* has done good numbers on mobile and while this seems to be more of a game in the traditional sense, that super-cute art style is doing a great job of dividing the *FF* fan base into those who love it and those who really, *really* don't.



3 READ-ONLY MEMORIES

If we said this was the lovechild of *Snatcher* and *Phoenix Wright*, you'd probably have a fair idea of whether or not you were on board. With simple puzzles, the focus is on narrative but both appear – from our brief time with the PC version – to be handled well. The cast is really varied too, making for one of the most inclusive gaming experiences we've encountered in some time.



TEAM PICK LIAM WARR 4 LEGO STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Was there any real surprise when TT Games announced this? No. Is the announcement a problem for anyone? No. What is delightful, though, is how TT Games plans to build on the film's lore in the game itself. The main game will follow the plot of the movie but as an added extra, as the game progresses you get the chance to unlock missions that go into more detail on the characters' backstories. That's going to be huge for any *Star Wars* fan, myself included.



MAJOR UPDATES

Popular games reinvented for handheld play



DAY OF THE TENTACLE REMASTERED

The Nineties point-and-click classic is getting a visual overhaul, just like *Monkey Island* and *Grim Fandango* before it. Find out first-hand why it's revered as one of the best examples of the genre.

ASCENSION: CHRONICLE OF THE GODSLAYER

A household name to those who know their board games, *Ascension* is one of the leading brands in deck-building gaming. With few card games on Vita, this will be a welcome addition to the library.

CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION 2+

A revised version of the console-skewed take on Sid Meier's classic world domination sim. The faster pace and reduced micromanagement make it perfect for handheld play.

ODIN SPHERE LEIFTHRASIR

Lost at the end of the PS2 era as most players were gearing up for the next generation, this is the perfect chance for Atlus' 2D action-RPG to finally get the attention it deserves.

ASSASSIN'S CREED CHRONICLES

Scratching a different itch to mainline AC titles, these 2D stealth-platformers are actually a much better fit for Vita than they are for the consoles they have been launching on so far...

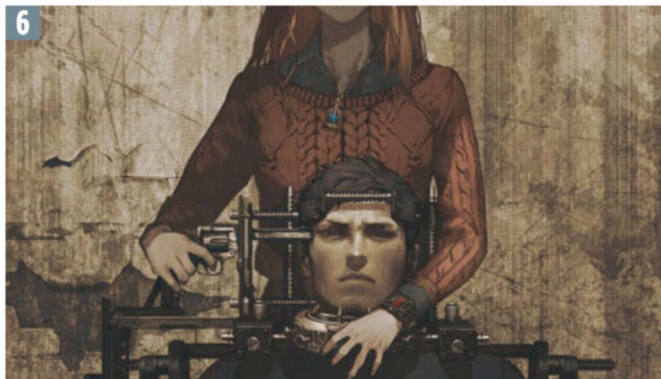
5 TONKIDEN 2

The original remains one of the best *Monster Hunter*-style games on the system, so hopes are high for this sequel to further close the gap on Capcom in terms of quality and content. Even more demon bosses to slay and turn into new gear was expected, but the shift to a fully open world in which to hunt these Oni down was not – still, it's something that should really help the game stand apart from its peers.



6 ZERO ESCAPE 3

What, you didn't expect a game as ridiculously popular as *Virtue's Last Reward* to get a sequel? All joking aside, it nearly didn't – the project was shelved several years ago when the team assumed it was wasting its time, but vocal fans managed to change a few minds. Good job, too... this visual-novel-cum-puzzle series has a great track record and the surprising success of *Danganronpa* will likely help it find new fans.



7 STEAMWORLD HEIST

Whereas the last game in the series, *SteamWorld Dig*, played out like a *Mr. Driller* RPG, this new title is instead an ingenious turn-based action strategy game. We love what we played of the 3DS version and it's really refreshing to see the team push and expand in entirely different directions with each new game rather than clinging to one style until it gets stale. What will the crazy fools end up doing next?



8 I AM SETSUNA

A traditional JRPG that uses something similar to the Active Time Battle System of older *Final Fantasy* games, this fusion of new and old should delight fans of that classic era of RPGs. In fact, that's its entire purpose – Square Enix set up this brand new studio to deliver on that very premise. It reviewed relatively well in Japan, but only the PS4 version looks to getting localised, so this might be one to import.

9 HERO MUST DIE

Originally released as a mobile game years ago, *Hero Must Die*'s premise is interesting. After defeating a demon lord, the main character has just five days to live. How you choose to spend this time is up to you, with numerous endings depending on what you do (or don't) manage to achieve in your last few days. While it's not yet confirmed for a western release, NIS is one of the leading supporters of Vita, so we'd be surprised if this one stays in Japan.

10 SIRALIM

Don't be fooled by the simple presentation of this monster-catching RPG – just like another extremely popular example of the genre, there's actually a ludicrous amount of depth to its systems. The world and dungeons are randomly generated, and you're free to do whatever you see fit, whether it's entering arena battles to show off your critters or breeding the ultimate companion. While there are currently no plans for an EU release, it's available now in the US.



Team Pick
PAUL WALKER-EMIG
11 DEX
Cybernetic upgrades; conspiracies; hacking; AIs; making choices that impact on the story; non-linear exploration; the future – *Dex* sounds and looks very much like a 2D *Deus Ex* and that's enough to get me on board. The only thing I'm not 100 per cent sold on are hacking sections that play similarly to a 2D shooter, but I am willing to be won over.

12 HATSUNE MIKU PROJECT DIVA X

Everyone's favourite vocaloid returns with another slice of colourful rhythm action craziness – fair play to Sega for giving this series a shot outside of Japan and even fairer play to everyone who got involved so far, because the games are awesome. With an eclectic soundtrack and challenging note charts, this is something that we implore all musical gamers to at least try.

13 SHIREN THE WANDERER: TOWER OF FORTUNE & DICE OF FATE

One of the founding fathers of console roguelikes finally makes its way to PlayStation Vita and having formed the basis for the likes of *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon*, we finally get to see this excellent randomly-generated dungeon-crawler in its original form. Endlessly replayable and perfect for a handheld, this did well in Japan last year and will be looking to repeat this success with the series' first Western release in almost a decade.



TEAM PICK DREW SLEEP 14 BLOODSTAINED: RITUAL OF THE NIGHT

What does it take to make me finally back a Kickstarter project? Well, a video of IGA wandering around a castle and a Vita stretch goal, apparently. A new *Castlevania* game from Konami looks increasingly unlikely with each passing day, but IGA is doing his best in bypassing that and is giving us a *Castlevania* game in everything but name.

15 RONIN

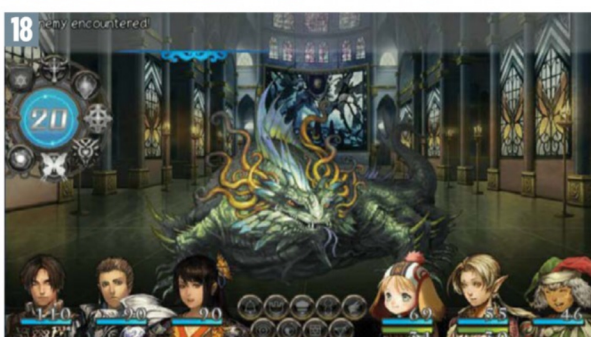
This feels a little like Klei's excellent *Mark Of The Ninja* until you get into the action and its main gimmick comes into play – while most platforming plays out in real time, action sequences are effectively turn-based, allowing you to string together slashes, dives, swings and dodges way more effectively than you otherwise might be able to.

16 DRIFT STAGE

Back when arcades were still a thing, colourful racing games were everywhere. This callback to that age mimics both the style and gameplay of classic racers like *OutRun* and *Ridge Racer* – there's a clue in the title as to how cars handle here, so don't go expecting simulation-style physics. Quick bursts of time attack racing make this a perfect fit for Vita.

17 EARTH NIGHT

This hand-painted runner is all about defending the planet from a dragon army...by running along their backs and then stabbing them in the face, apparently. It's more about the journey than the destination, though, with every beast procedurally generated in order to present new hazards and patterns every time you embark on another slaying quest.



18 STRANGER OF SWORD CITY

There weren't all that many Japan-exclusive Xbox 360 games but this RPG was among the elite in that regard. Its hardcore nature means that it won't be for everyone but if you enjoyed games like *Demon Gaze* (which also has a sequel on the way this year), you'll likely find yourself right at home here. Turn-based RPGs are a rarity these days, so we'll take whatever we can get!

19 ZODIAC: ORCANON ODYSSEY

This gorgeous RPG takes its cues from the likes of *Final Fantasy* and *Grandia*, so we were a little disappointed when it met with a fairly negative reception when it hit iOS late last year. Still, its unfinished state and buggy nature were major contributors to this, and both could easily be ironed out before the game arrives on Vita. We certainly hope that's the case, anyway...





20 RAY GIGANT

Switching between 3D labyrinth exploration and staged turn-based battles against beautifully drawn and animated beasts, *Ray Gigant* will feel rather familiar to anyone who played *Demon Gaze* or indeed the *Etrian Odyssey* games. Unapologetically hardcore, it's not something that fans of simpler RPGs will necessarily get on with but if it *does* manage to sink its claws in, you'll likely be lost in dungeons for months.

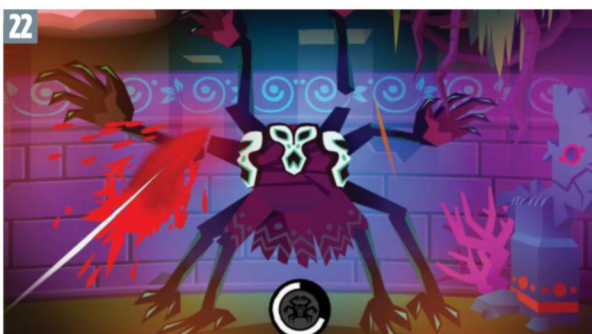


21 HUE

Every good puzzle-platformer needs a gimmick – *Braid* had time manipulation, *Fez* toyed with perspective and as you can probably ascertain from the title, this newcomer makes smart use of colour. Selecting a tint from your wheel might cause hazards or obstacles to blend into the background and become passable, or it could throw up new threats or options that were previously hidden.

22 SEVERED

What comes after a Metroidvania-style adventure where you play as a luchador? Well, if you're Drinkbox Studios, the logical answer is apparently 'a touch-controlled dungeon crawler about dismemberment'. Sure, of course it is. Like *Dead Space* or *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, setting up enemies for limb removal is crucial to success although here, removed appendages can be used for upgrading your gear.



HARDCORE GAMES

Think you're good? Prove it...



VOLGARR THE VIKING

Similar to *Shovel Knight* (only even tougher), this scrolling fighter will test your reflexes as well as your ability to learn enemy attack patterns. Insert all-too-easy *Dark Souls* reference here.

STRENGTH OF THE SWORD ULTIMATE

A successful Kickstarter campaign is allowing the two-man team to turn their excellent PS3 arena combat game into something much bigger. Expect bosses... many, *many* bosses.

GOD EATER 2

Bandai Namco's *Monster Hunter* clone did pretty well on PSP and a sequel was always on the cards. Turn your chomping gun-mouth-thing on the huge enemies and turn them into awesome hats.

SALT AND SANCTUARY

Following on from the excellent *Dishwasher* games on 360, Ska Studios has effectively made a 2D *Souls* game. It's bleak, it's tough, and it's bloody brilliant. Prepare to die.

TRILLION: GOD OF DESTRUCTION

You've bested JRPG bosses before, but have you faced one that had *one trillion HP*? Thought not. Try to bring down this badass across multiple encounters without losing your favourite characters.

WHAT THE...?

The oddest of the odd



PAVILION

Imagine if instead of controlling one main character, you instead controlled the world around them. That's the setup for this 'fourth-person puzzling adventure', and it's certainly interesting.

SOFT BODY

"You are a beautiful gooey snake," the trailer tells us. Sure, why not? *Hohokum* via *Geometry Wars*, with the added bonus of being able to create cover by brushing past blocks to make them solid.

SENTRAN KAGURA: ESTIVAL VERSUS

Behind the hyper-sexualisation lies a competent action game, albeit not one you probably want to bust out on public transport unless you enjoy getting death stares from old people.

LOUD ON PLANET X

Just when you thought there were no genres left to splice, along comes a rhythm-action-tower-defence game, and one where the heroes are real indie bands. Colour us intrigued.

MYRIAD

We've played a fair bit of *Myriad*, but we still don't really understand it. It's a shooter where you create and move parts of the world as you play, and it's trippy as all hell.

23 SLAIN!

The metal-obsessed cousin of similar throwbacks like *Volgarr* and *Shovel Knight*, *Slain!* is a hardcore side-scrolling action game with stunning Gothic design, buckets of gore and an uncharacteristic (for this kind of game, at least) emphasis on actually using your brain. As the title suggests, expect to get your ass handed to you in all kinds of brutal ways – this adventure sure ain't gonna be an easy one.

24 AZTEZ

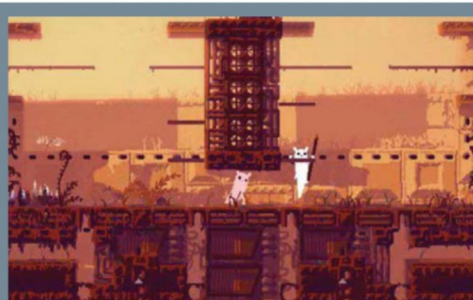
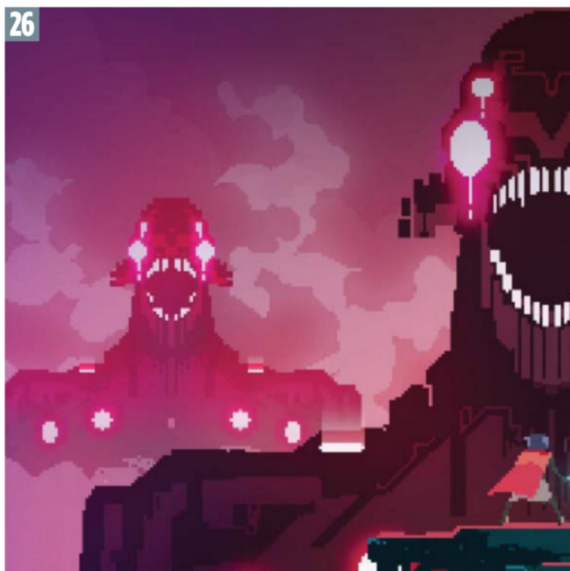
You only have to see this stylish combat title in action for a few seconds to understand where those referencing the likes of *Devil May Cry* and *Bayonetta* are coming from – it might be 2D but the act of stringing together chains of attacks, dodges and parries to create stunning displays of shameless ultra-violence is absolutely spot on. Various weapons and abilities should allow for creative combo play too, which we'll be all over.

25 COSMIC STAR HEROINE

Zeboyd Games' previous releases paint the small indie team as one that is happy to playfully poke fun at the concepts and tropes of the formative years of the console RPG, but this will see an evolution from parody to more rounded design and direction. The studio's skill with humour and characterisation will likely make it across – to a degree, at least – so we are very keen to give this retro-style sci-fi RPG a whirl.

26 HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER

Its original crowdfunding campaign was looking to raise a meager \$27,000, but it's testament to how good the game looks (and the popularity of those it name-checks) that it managed to hit over 20 times that initial target. *Hyper Light Drifter* takes inspiration from 16-bit *Zelda* games and Studio Ghibli animated movies, albeit with beautiful animation and visuals used to tell the story rather than dialogue.



TEAM PICK LUKE ALBIGÉS 27 RAIN WORLD

It was love at first sight for me with this one. That little slugcat is just too damn adorable, which is going to make it all the more crushing when it gets dragged off, smashed up or devoured by the creepy creatures that inhabit this harsh world. It's a survival game of sorts but one where exploration is key, and the procedural animation tech at work here is a whole new level of awesome.



28 ICONOCLASTS

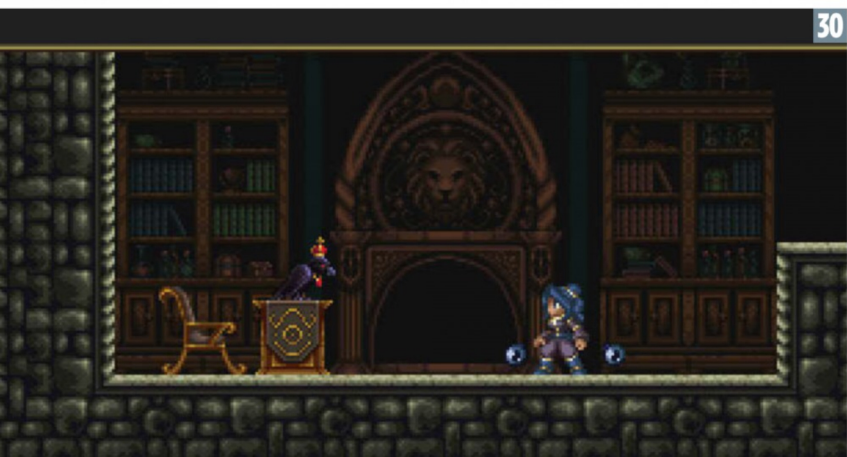
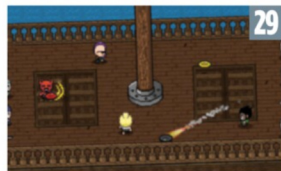
Another retro-style side-scrolling action game following in the wake of *Shovel Knight*'s critical and commercial success, this blends platforming and combat with a little bit more of a puzzle element than its peers. It's also much more detailed visually than similar old school games, which will help when it comes to characterisation and driving the narrative forwards.

29 DISCSTORM

We really like *TowerFall*, and we really like Frisbees. So naturally, if a game came along that combined the two, we'd be all kinds of exci... HOLD ON, WHAT'S THIS? Looks like we got our wish. There's more to the solo campaign than *TowerFall*'s offering but competitive disc-lobbing should be instantly familiar – with a finite amount of 'ammo', it's all about aiming and recovering spent discs.

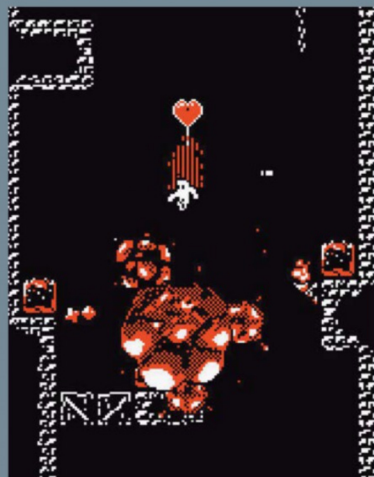
30 TIMESPINNER

Bloodstained might have the advantage of having *Castlevania* legend IGA on board, but it's not the only title on this rundown that serves as a love letter to *Symphony Of The Night*. No, *Timespinner* is another game that looks to be using the PSone classic for inspiration, although the novelty of manipulating time in various ways should lead to even more creative and interesting ways to explore the world and bring down its bosses.



DESKTOP VETERANS

PC favourites headed for Vita



DOWNWELL

Imagine *Spelunky* playing out downwards at 100mph and you're on the right track. Your gun-boots will help in your descent but they won't last forever – how deep can you go?

RISK OF RAIN

A fast-paced retro shooter with a novel gimmick where the game gets tougher the longer you stay alive. What better excuse to try and get a level done before you get off the bus?

STARBOUND

Terraria meets *No Man's Sky* in a mind-blowing universe where you're free to craft and explore as you like. It's still in Early Access on Steam but it'll be hitting Vita when it's done... whenever that is.

DARKEST DUNGEON

An old-school RPG where your party members can be broken mentally as well as physically – keep morale up or expect your heroes to question why they're even trying and give up altogether.

PAPERS, PLEASE

Who would have thought that working in a border security booth could be entertaining? It can get pretty grim too, as you'll find when you start denying entry to starving families. You monster.

FEATURE | ADRIFF



LOST IN SPACE



ADAM ORTH, DIRECTOR OF THE UPCOMING ADR1FT, EXPLAINS HOW THE GAMES INDUSTRY AND SOCIAL MEDIA INSPIRED A NEW KIND OF SCI-FI ADVENTURE

Considering everything that's happened in his life over the past three years – not to mention the fact that he's calling us whilst stranded in hellish Los Angeles traffic – Adam Orth sounds remarkably calm. Three One Zero, the company Orth co-founded in 2013, has just completed work on its debut game *ADRIFT* – “We actually finished it last night,” Orth says. He's now en route to his Santa Monica office to start organising dates for the game's press tour. But before the junkets and the parties begin in earnest, Orth has time to reflect on how he, his company and *ADRIFT* got to this point.

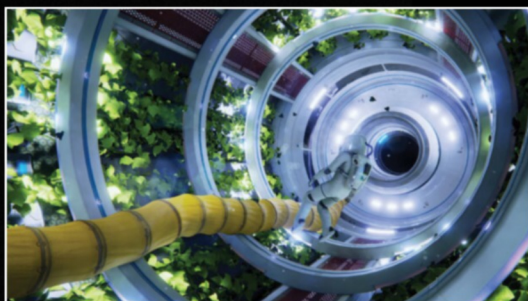
“I left Microsoft in 2013,” he explains. “I was at a time in my life where I wanted to do something different. I called my friend Omar [Aziz] – we'd worked together on *Medal Of Honor* games at EA, before breaking off to do our own things – and he was feeling the same way. He was at Treyarch, working on *Black Ops*, and was tired of making shooters. So I pitched him the idea for *ADRIFT* over the phone and in 30 seconds, we had our company.

“I was living in Seattle at the time but planning to move back home to Santa

Monica, where Omar was living. We had a lunch meeting and he brought our first prototype, which at the time was running in *Unity*. I managed to get us some seed money, about three month's worth, and we hired an artist, Hogarth de la Plante, who'd worked on *BioShock*. That was at the end of 2013. We decided we'd give ourselves ten weeks to make as polished a prototype as possible and then take it to the DICE summit in February. We finished the prototype on the Saturday night then packed up and went to Vegas for meetings on Monday morning.”

Prior to arriving at DICE, Three One Zero had meetings scheduled with ten potential investors. After demoing *ADRIFT* on the conference's first day, that number ballooned to 30 – Three One Zero had its pick of the publishers.

“We'd spent basically the last of our money getting to DICE,” Orth explains. “We knew that if it didn't get picked up, for Three One Zero, that would probably be it. But we had a really finished prototype. It had full audio, full art – we believed in it. We ended up in the middle of a bidding war and eventually signed with 505, a small publisher based out here in California. I signed the contract



SPACE, 2037

Set 21 years from now, ADRIFT is an optimistic look at mankind's future

SOMA, *Deus Ex*, *Fallout* – a lot of science fiction games take a dim view of the future, predicting a world where humans are either living in an apocalyptic wasteland or simply all dead. But *ADRIFT* has a little more hope. Contrary to the dark, grey confines of the space stations from, say, *Alien: Isolation* or *Dead Space*, *Three One Zero* has tried to create brighter, friendlier environments.

"The visual style is purposefully different than every space game that's out right now," says Adam Orth. "It

isn't brushed steel and holograms – it's tactile. Even when you get to a place that's blown apart, it still feels comfortable and peaceful."

However, the comfortable interiors are contrasted with the harsh nothingness of space – transferring from one section of the destroyed station to another won't be easy.

"When you're in structures, the station and the station computer are helping your oxygen levels," continues Orth. "But when you're out in the vacuum of space, it's terrifying."

with them about a month later, an hour before I was meant to go on stage at GDC and give a talk. I don't remember the talk at all. It was so crazy."

Founded in Italy in 2006, 505, especially through its subsidiary label 505 GameStreet, had served as a publisher for party and simulation games. But a few mainstream hits – *Payday 2*, *Terraria* and *Sniper Elite V2*, among others – proved the company was ready for bigger challenges.

"If we were going to do this, we were going to do it on our own terms," says Orth. "That meant making our own game the way we wanted to. We went with 505 because they were hungry. *ADRIFT* would be one of the first games they'd taken from start to finish."

With 505's backing, Orth could assemble finally his studio dream team.

world – *ADRIFT*'s animation work and the vista of the Earth that dominates the game's background were created by *Unreal*-proficient freelancers. *Three One Zero* also became more structured. Though a lot of them worked from home, meetings between *Three One Zero*'s core members would be held over Skype every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The same triple-A experience that had left Orth fatigued proved instrumental when it came to managing his company.

"We're a very focused team," Orth explains. "It was never a case of 'let's try this and see what happens in a couple of weeks.' There were milestones and sprints. We did all this stuff by the book. That's the stuff we took out of triple-A, the process and the meeting of goals. I think a lot of indie developers

"WE FINISH EACH OTHER'S SENTENCES. SOMETIMES WE DON'T EVEN HAVE TO START THEM"

Matteo Marsala, a veteran of EA, was hired as *Three One Zero*'s producer. Designers Sam Bass and Tom Gerber, and art director Jason Barajas, all of whom had worked with Orth on the *Medal Of Honor* series, were brought in also, thus creating *ADRIFT*'s core development staff.

"It was like getting the band back together," Orth says. "One of these guys was working on *Call Of Duty*, another was at Blizzard. But within 30 seconds of talking to any of them, they were in. We all had triple-A fatigue. The pitch wasn't just about *ADRIFT*. It was about the way we wanted to make games."

ADRIFT's engine was switched from *Unity* to *Unreal 4*. Described by Orth as the "industry standard," it allowed *Three One Zero* not only to create better looking, more detailed environments but work with contractors all over the

don't have that discipline. With our experience, we understand the realities of making a game."

Still, working without interference from a publisher, and without anyone above to ask questions and make demands, was an occasionally jarring change for *Three One Zero*.

"I've had my own company for two-and-a-half years now but still, whenever I have an idea, I think 'man, they're never going to let me do that!'" Orth says. "I've been trained to think a certain way. I have PTSD from triple-A."

"Still, when you don't have to answer to anyone, it can be totally paralyzing. Fortunately, we have killer level designers and killer moment-to-moment gameplay designers, so I don't have to worry about it all. We finish each other's sentences. Sometimes we don't even have to start them."

"...TO EXPLORE STRANGE NEW WORLDS"

There's more to games than just shooting and fighting

After spending, cumulatively, so many years working on triple-A shooters, it's little wonder the team at Three One Zero has grown tired of guns and fighting. But simply removing weapons from *ADRIFT* – or any game – isn't enough. To save it from becoming what Orth calls a 'floating simulator,' *ADRIFT*'s

level designers have been busy finding alternate things for players to do.

As you explore the destroyed space station, naturally you find the diaries, journals and – more morbidly – corpses of the former crew members. But there's more to do than just reading. *ADRIFT* is filled

with small mechanics and light puzzles. Everything is operated using buttons and levers. Your survival depends on finding oxygen tanks. And if you want to get from room to room, you have to take a nerve-racking trip through the vacuum of space, where even a slight miscalculation can mean game over.



Logistics aside, *ADRIFT* also presented a lot of creative challenges. It's a game with no guns, no enemies, no living characters except the player. And, of course, it's set in space. Designing a movement system that would make players feel like they were in zero gravity, as well as a space station that would still make architectural sense – even when it was explored in destroyed, fragmented pieces – were two of Three One Zero's biggest tests.

"The gun in an FPS is how you interact with the world. This is a very different game to that. It's very slow-moving and solitary," explains Orth. "But, we wanted to make sure you weren't just floating around listening and reading. We wanted you to be constantly touching the world and performing these light mechanics. The movement in *ADRIFT* is a very important thing. You have this suit and it's damaged and slowly draining oxygen, so you really have to think about where you're moving and why you're moving. You get into this cerebral rhythm: 'am I going to make it over there before I run out?' There are all these different micro-decisions. Every movement in *ADRIFT* matters.

"Still, we built and deleted large parts of the game four or five times. It was hard – how do you make pieces of a place that are no longer connected feel like a cohesive environment that's all connected? When the player can enter these rooms from, you know, 14 different ways, that's challenging. But our level designers did such a good job of making everything feel connected. You can be in this fuselage and then you come out, and there's a space walk to



this piece that used to be part of what you were standing in, and you and you can still feel the relationship."

For Orth, this game is a personal project – one of the hardest parts about *ADRIFT*'s creation has been revisiting the event that inspired it in the first place. His departure from Microsoft was prompted after he posted a series of tweets about the upcoming Xbox One, arguing that if the rumours were true and the console required a constant internet connection in order to function, it was no problem. Twitter users reacted angrily and Orth became the centre of a scandal. The story of *ADRIFT*, whereby a space station is torn apart, leaving the player to wander through its remains, is a reflection of Orth's personal history.

"One day I woke up and, by my own doing, my life was completely destroyed," says Orth. "I think about it less now, but it hasn't gone away.

I made a stupid mistake and I deal with that event every day. That's what *ADRIFT* is about. Even the 'I' in the title is a reference to what happened.

"It was a destructive period in my life. But this game, the studio... none of it would exist without that happening. It's an important part of this whole ride."

Isolated in the reaches of space, picking through the wreckage of what once was. This is what it's like to play *ADRIFT*. It's a science fiction adventure about universal human experience.

"We made the game we wanted to make and we're happy so, to that extent, *ADRIFT* is already a success," Orth says. "But my goal is for people to finish it and have a moment of reflection, and think about how it relates to something that's happened in their lives. Before anything new can arise, sometimes things have to get ground down to nothing."

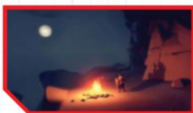
INDIEVELOPMENT

Our indie expert Paul Walker-Emig delves into the exciting, strange and intriguing world of indie development to pick out the best of what's coming to PlayStation



Jumping straight to the top of our (admittedly ever in-flux) list of PS4 indie games that we are most excited about is **LITTLE DEVIL INSIDE**. You play as a college professor who investigates paranormal activities, serving as a pretext for you to embark on adventures where you are chased down by dragons in the woods, get into shootouts in the desert, brawl with monsters atop mountains and sail on kraken-infested seas. It's an incredibly diverse game then, both in terms of its environments and what you are doing when you're exploring them. On the former, the game looks wonderful, channeling a colourful *Wind Waker*-esque minimalism that's complemented by incredible animation, demonstrating that this is a studio with plenty of panache when it comes to the way its game looks and moves. The variety of what you're doing in the game and what you're going up against is appealing too, but we're perhaps more enthused by the focus the studio is placing on making the game feel like a journey, rather than a series of missions. Eventful long hikes and rides are a

AOXO We've never encountered a college professor who wears a cape, but that's why videogames are better than real life.



part of that, but the team also hopes to achieve this by paying attention to the everyday elements of someone living "a realistic life in an unrealistic world". It's a very ambitious game, offering RPG, survival and exploration elements, gun combat, melee combat, social hubs and more – we just hope the studio isn't overreaching. If it can prove that it isn't, this game is going to be great.

It's the early hours of the morning, the music from next-door's party is still blaring through your walls, and all you want to do is sleep. That is the set-up for **PARTY HARD**, a game where the sleep-starved neighbour that you play as finally snaps and goes on a murderous *Hotline Miami*-style rampage to shut down the reverie and get revenge.

Unlike *Hotline Miami*, however, you're

not walking into an environment that's immediately hostile, so you will want to be cautious about anyone seeing you knock off their fellow partygoers, because they'll cry murder and that means the police are going to arrive, which you'll want to delay for as long as possible. So, while you can just walk around knifing people, you'll want to also set traps and use your environments to take out your targets. You can, for example, poison the punch, or take the handbrake off a truck and walk away while it rolls over the unsuspecting revelers in its path. It sounds bleak, but this stealthy murder-er-up actually has a real sense of fun courtesy of its dark slapstick humour.

Seeing as we've had two single-player games so far, let's move onto a game



DEV DIARY Rob Fearon on bringing Death Ray Manta to PlayStation

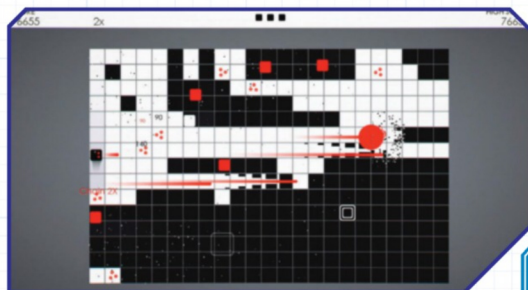
Moving from PC to Vita means losing a lot of the overhead I rely on when it comes to how I deal with my effects. A few ports cut corners in ways I'm not happy with doing to get round this.

I'm currently trying to see how closely I can replicate the PC version, reducing texture sizes, adjusting transparency, trying to keep it as pretty as I can. It's more work than I expected, anyway.

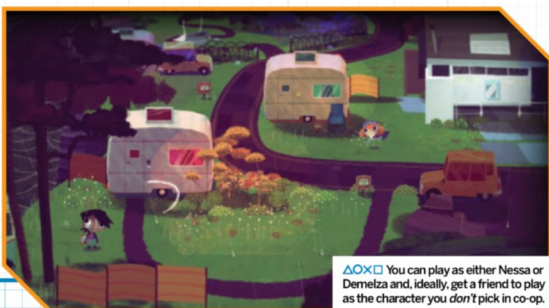
I have a backup idea for a redesign if necessary. I have a more traditional arcade look I used for prototyping waiting just in case. Hopefully, I can crack my preferred style instead.



where you can get your friends involved and talk about **INVERSUS**. You control a black or white square on a black and white board. Black can only move over white tiles and white can only move over black tiles. Crucially, however, you can open up new routes by shooting, which will flip the colour of the tiles as your projectile moves through them. To use developer Hypersect's words, "my paths are your walls and your paths are my walls". This gives this multiplayer shooter a strategic edge as you mould the level to try and suit your ends, trapping your opponent with a well placed shot, or blocking an shot from your opponent with a bullet of your own when you see what they're trying to do. The importance the game places on spatial awareness and manipulation of your opponent reminds us of *Bombberman*, which can only be a good thing when you're talking about multiplayer games. With a brilliant concept at its heart and levels designed to showcase the best of



"THE GAME LOOKS WONDERFUL, CHANNELING A COLOURFUL WIND WAKER-ESQUE MINIMALISM"



it, we can see this one becoming the game of choice for our office multiplayer sessions.

Our next and final game can be played solo or in co-op and it's called **KNIGHTS AND BIKES**. Inspired by the likes of *Earthbound*, *Secret Of Mana* and *The Goonies*, this RPG adventure aims to capture the wonder and imagination of childhood as you explore the island of Penfurzy to save the adults from the monsters invading it (using frisbees and bicycles, as any self-respecting kid would). Unsurprisingly, given that the creative lead of *Tearaway* is on board, the game is instantly endearing, its hand-drawn art style brimming with character and its world looks to be packed with heart and soul. Whether all that proves to be true when we finally get to play it on PS4, we don't yet know, but we're certainly looking forward to saddling up to find out.

FUNDED BATTALION 1944

PLATFORMS: PS4
ETA: MAY 2017



There appears to be an appetite for an era that FPS games had left behind – the likes of *Call Of Duty* moving ever further into the future – because WWII shooter *Battalion 1944* has stepped into that gap and won the support it needs from Kickstarter. Referencing the likes of *Medal Of Honor* and *Call Of Duty 2* as inspirations, developer Bulkhead promises to capture the intensity of classic multiplayer shooters.

WISHLIST BEAT DA BEAT



This retro-styled title is a blend of rhythm-action and bullet hell shooter that aims to bring together the best of those genres. That is to say, the pulsating soundtrack you'd expect from a rhythm game and the intense battles with gigantic bosses you'd expect from a shooter, mashed together to create something entirely new. *Beat Da Beat* looks pretty challenging, to say the least, but it's a challenge we'd love to test ourselves against on PS4 and Vita.

IF YOU LOVE... TERRARIA



The next game from the makers of *Terraria* is *Pixel Piracy*, where you recruit a crew and set sail to pillage and plunder.

ETA 2016 | PUB EPIC GAMES | DEV IN-HOUSE | TWITTER @PARAGON

Paragon

More of a Renegade, actually



ONCE RESPONSIBLE FOR leaving a crater where your right mouse button used to be, the MOBA has since transcended its PC origins and

has started trickling onto consoles, and 'trickling' is definitely right word to use here. *Smite* on Xbox One (and soon arriving on PS4) is the biggest console MOBA at the moment but, despite its success on PC, its arrival on console came with a whimper and not the thunderous boom that the gods it depicts deserve. It's evidently hard to get the console audience interested in the PC-centric genre – that much is clear. This is all set to change, though: *Paragon* is coming.

While the likes of Gearbox and Blizzard skirt around the term, Epic isn't afraid of calling *Paragon* a MOBA. Creative director Steve Superville basically bellowed *Paragon*'s genre roots from a mountaintop at PSX, figuratively speaking. It's worth noting, however, that Epic isn't porting the genre across from PC wholesale. No, think of *Paragon* as more of a crossbreed. It's got third-person shooter DNA hardwired into it, and that is the best thing for a console MOBA. Vigorous right-clicking on everything isn't for everyone and Epic knows this, so it's comforting to know that *Paragon* will let you to strafe and aim, alongside kiting enemies and managing cooldowns.

The genre mix-up doesn't stop here, though. *Paragon*'s map embraces the z-axis and sections of it are situated above or below the main lanes. This added level of verticality is going to prompt smaller skirmishes for the higher ground during team fights where characters fight for a vantage point. Picture it: a team fight initiates and the tanks are smashing fists, metal and bone together on the frontline while the DPS characters rain down damage-number-flavoured death from above while the assassins quickly take to the skies to take down the squishy damage-dealers, and all the while the support characters are sat in a corner, crying



"THIS IS LIKE THE GENRE HAS JUST DISCOVERED FIRE, ELECTRICITY OR THE WHEEL"

because they don't know who to help first as it looks like everything has gone to shit.

The tweaks that Epic is making to the genre sound basic, sure, but remember that us MOBA devotees are only used to right-clicking, staying out of attack range and maybe pulling off a jump/dash ability – discovering higher or lower ground and actually aiming basic attacks is like the genre has just discovered fire, electricity or the wheel. The MOBA genre is in dire need of innovation, and Epic is apparently the only developer out there with the gall to do just that, so kudos for that.

While Epic has given the genre a bit of a tweak and spliced DNA here and there, the game is still intrinsically a MOBA. You still have to fight your way through a gauntlet of turrets to destroy the enemy MacGuffin (in this case, it's called a Core); you still level up by killing mobs and enemy Heroes; you still level up various abilities. Epic is swapping out shops and items, though, in favour of a card-based system, where you earn points to spend on cards

THE DREAM TEAM

Meet (some of) *Paragon*'s Heroes



SPARROW

Katniss Everdeen Clone Designation 599b plays like a typical bow user – expect high damage and low mobility. She's ideal for learning the ropes.



DEKKER

We're not too sure *what* to label Dekker as. With the ability to create an inescapable arena, she's like a support but she's also capable of bringing the pain.



STEEL

Everything about Steel screams tank: he's big, he's buff, he's armoured and he fights using a massive shield – you'll want to stay behind this guy.



TWINBLAST

Shooty gun man has guns and can shoot things. Like Sparrow, Twinblast is pretty self-explanatory and is obviously a DPS (or ranger) Hero.



GRUX

Do you like meeting your enemy head-on, preferably using an axe or any other form of blunt object? Well, meet Grux – you two are going to be friends.



△×□ The game generally looks nothing short of beautiful. Epic really knows how to utilise its engine – who would've thought?



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ Epic is the architect of the *Unreal* engine and, therefore, knows how to utilise it best.

□ Each character's Ultimate ability looks as devastating as it should.

× It has been made with a clear design philosophy. It's not looking to please everyone.

○ Epic is building *Paragon* on a foundation of player feedback.

and upgrade your character's stats and it's here where we start to worry about *Paragon*. You build a deck before going into battle, meaning you're limiting yourself to one or two character builds per deck. We're not entirely sure if this fits a MOBA but we're willing to let it breathe before giving a verdict.

Despite coming this year, *Paragon* has a way to go. What we've seen so far is promising, sure, but in order to be a success, *Paragon* is going to need a hell of a lot of polish – damage values need to be refined, distilled and refined again; buff placements needs to be pixel-perfect; every character needs to be balanced fastidiously. We're confident, though, that vigorous beta testing, alongside Epic's dependence on feedback, will hone this into something worth throwing your spare time at.

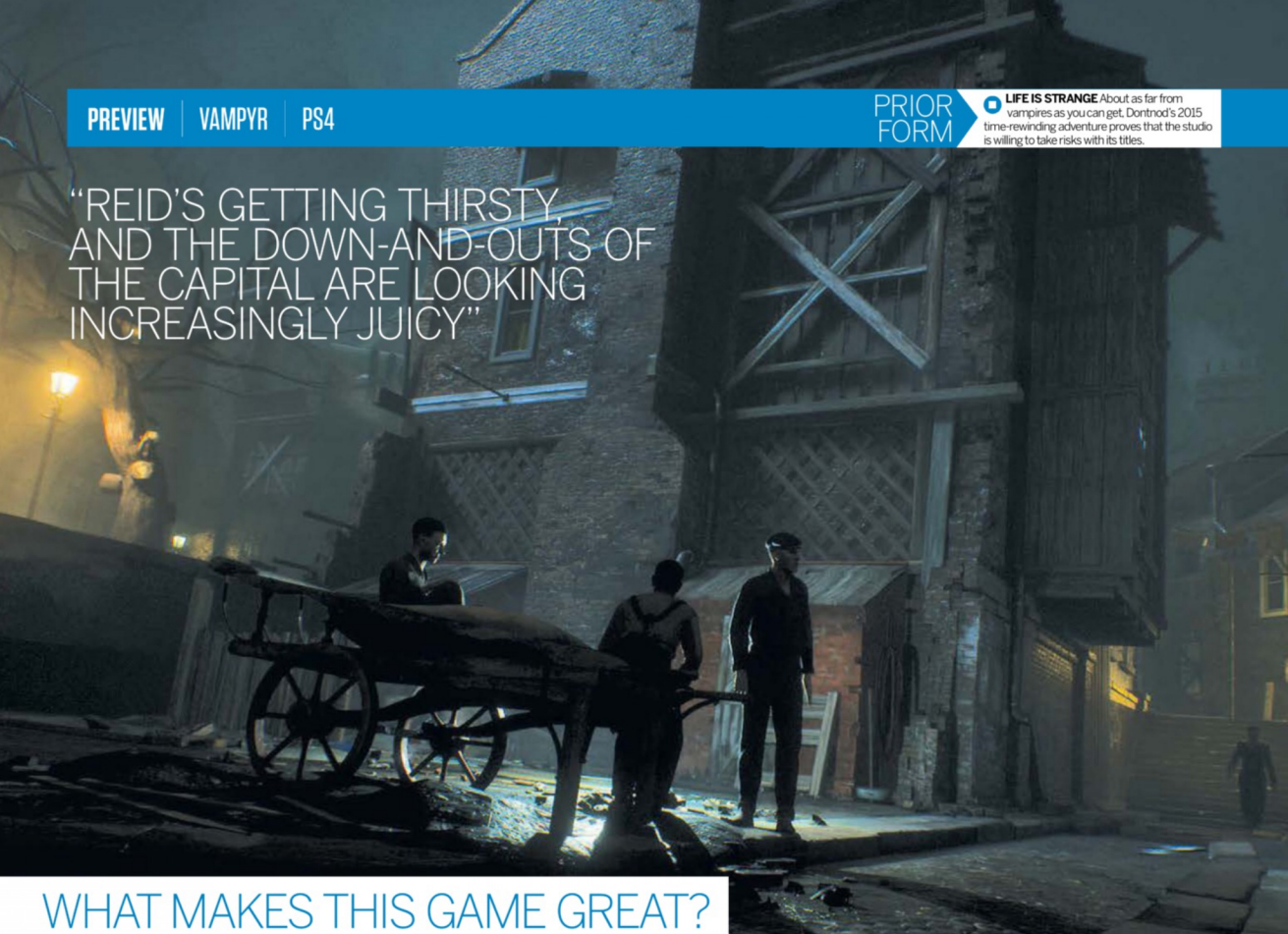
Drew Sleep

PARAGON is the result of Epic Games grinding away in the jungle for the past few years. More information here: epicgames.com/paragon/



△×□ The Play team is pretty obsessed with any game with damage numbers, and *Paragon* is going to have a lot of those.

"REID'S GETTING THIRSTY, AND THE DOWN-AND-OUTS OF THE CAPITAL ARE LOOKING INCREASINGLY JUICY"



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



The smoggy gloom we see being explored is deeply oppressive and creepy.



The streets are mostly deserted, but there are about 60 NPCs to talk to or drain.



You need to feed carefully – killing a character may have dire repercussions.



You're going to have to balance being a good guy with eating street urchins.



△○X□ Reid isn't the only vampire walking the streets of London. We've only seen lesser thralls so far, but expect to encounter more powerful bloodsuckers as the game goes on.

Vampyr

The thirst is real



EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT the past was horrid. That's why old people drink so much sherry. The towns were always on fire, countries were always invading one another and everyone coughed themselves to death by the age of 27. Nothing good ever happened in the past.

If you ask a historian, they'll tell you that Victorian London was the very worst bit of past that ever happened, with children being squeezed down chimneys to sweep out the plague and rats selling themselves on street corners for cheese. What they won't tell you about is the plague of vampirism that kept Londoners trembling in their homes at night (which was all the time, apparently, as daylight in London was not invented until the end of the World War II).

Vampyr, a third-person bite-em-up from *Life Is Strange* developer Dontnod, tells the real story. In a Gothic London choked in fog, your surgeon Jonathan Reid has fallen prey to one of the city's roaming bloodsuckers and is on a mission to find the creature responsible. Problem is, now he's getting thirsty, and the poor down-and-outs of the capital are looking increasingly plump and juicy.

The central question of *Vampyr*, then, is whether or not you can resist this dark urge to snack on street urchins and the homeless, or tuck in your bib and treat London like a wailing tasting menu. The characters still wandering the streets after dark all have some reason to be out there (between you and the Spanish Flu epidemic that's rocking the city) – some innocent, some not so much. As you progress, you'll use the dialogue system to winkle out clues and leads from characters to solve quests – one section we saw had Reid looking for the mysterious doctor running an illegally knocked-up flu clinic – but their real value is in upending them like fleshy decanters and draining them of their claret.

Blood – more precisely, the drinking thereof – is, you see, the fastest route to boosting Reid's stats and upgrading his abilities. And abilities are important because you're not the only vampire stalking London's cobbles. The combat we see at this stage of development (*Vampyr* is scheduled for release next year) is pretty straightforward:

Reid comes across a handful of lesser vampires – who behave more like *Dishonored*'s Weepers or *The Last of Us*'s Runners than 'proper' vampires – and fights them with a combination of his surgical bone saw and vampiric powers, at one point levitating one of the creatures into the air to buy time to perform impromptu amputations on the rest of the unruly bunch.

But without regular donations from London's paupers and outcasts, unlocking these powers is substantially more difficult. We do briefly glimpse a blood pack item in the demo, suggesting that there will be other, slower ways to level up, but the greatest boost comes from feeding. To do this, we see the developer finish a conversation with a homeless former soldier, having convinced him to divulge a clue to the off-books doctor's whereabouts, then use the Seduce ability to put him into a suggestible stupor. Then, Reid walks him off the street into an alley, and drains him until his body crumples to the stones.

The downside to this is that when you leave a body sprawled lifeless on the street, it creates a considerable stir among Londoners the next day. The press will apparently get hold of the story and use your grisly nighttime activities as front-page news, stoking (Stoker-ing?) public fear of the vampire menace and steadily turning London into a darker and more horrible place than it already is. Play through as an abstemious drinker and the city might turn out just about alright, but kill and feed indiscriminately and by the end of the game, you'll have left London as a kind of on-fire Venice where all the canals are full of blood.

All of which makes *Vampyr* look like some pleasingly hideous chimera – a morality-versus-upgrades system from *Dishonored*, combat from *Shadows Of Mordor* and cause-and-effect dialogue from, of all things, *Alpha Protocol*. Which is to set *Vampyr* an extraordinarily high bar, but one we really hope Reid flaps his way over. Before swooping down to eat an orphan.

Rich Wordsworth

VAMPYR is being starved of blood over at Dontnod Entertainment. Check the website for more details... just avoid the dark alleles: vampyr-game.com.

BLOOD OR MERCY

Stop eating everything, Reid...

With around 60 characters to talk to and/or slaughter, your game will most likely play out differently to those of your friends. In the demo we saw, for example, the developer elected to spare a kid sleeping rough, but interrogate and then devour a homeless former soldier. Sparing or killing characters will have repercussions down the line for Reid – so watch what you eat.

ETA 2016 | PUB SNK PLAYMORE | DEV IN-HOUSE | TWITTER @SNKOFFICIAL

The King Of Fighters XIV

Can SNK's first fighter in five years reclaim the throne?



WE'VE HAD a great deal of love for *The King Of Fighters* as a series over the years. It's the first thing we think of whenever we hear the Neo-Geo

start-up sound, and while *King Of Fighters XIII* flew under the radar a little, it was one of the best fighting games of the last console generation. But we've had to temper our expectations a little for *The King Of Fighters XIV*, because SNK Playmore is attempting to transition the series into 3D – something that the developer traditionally hasn't been very good at, having failed to successfully take the likes of *Metal Slug*, *Samurai Shodown* and *Fatal Fury* past their sprite-based roots. *The King Of Fighters* has also fallen victim to this in the past, with the *Maximum Impact* spin-off series on PS2 a notable polygonal low point.

At first glance, *The King Of Fighters XIV* is worrying. There's no getting around the fact that it looks pretty underwhelming for a PS4 game, and the character models in particular look like they've come from a budget PS3 title. However, the reason for this seems to be that the roster is absolutely stacked, with 50 fighters promised across 16 teams. The huge roster is necessary for the series' customary three-on-three team battles, and we are particularly pleased to see that SNK has chosen this approach – it's no coincidence that poorly-regarded entries in the series such as *The King Of Fighters XII* and the aforementioned *Maximum Impact* series are the ones that dropped the team battles in favour of a smaller and more detailed cast.

So far we've seen lots of returning cast members, with the usual faces such as Kyo, Iori, Terry and Leona showing up, but the surprises have been thin on the ground. The return of Angel is welcome, as she was easily the best thing about *The King Of Fighters 2001*, and the King Of Dinosaurs is technically a new character but his grappling moves remind us of an awful lot of Tizoc, another wrestler in an animal mask. We'd ideally like to see more newcomers, but with only a third of the roster revealed, there's every chance that we will. Mechanically, the game ditches *XIII*'s HD



"THERE'S NO GETTING AROUND THE FACT THAT IT LOOKS PRETTY UNDERWHELMING FOR A PS4 GAME"

system for a return to the Max Mode of previous instalments, which gives a timer for performing unlimited EX specials and Max supers. It's also known that a variation of the Just Defend system from *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* has been included, which rewards perfectly-timed blocks similar to *Third Strike*'s parry system.

However, it's the little things that really give us hope that SNK's first major console release in five years will have been worth the wait. The slight pause that accompanies each hit in the 2D games is present and correct, and experienced players can string together familiar combos with ease. The online Party Battle mode allows for teams of players to face off, with each controlling one member of a three-character team. The world-building seems to be on point, too – the animation really shows off the personalities that the developer has crafted for characters over the last couple of decades, and seeing Neo-Geo Land in the background gives us a pang of nostalgic joy.



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COMBO EXHIBITIONS

Show us your moves

While *The King Of Fighters XIII* was always one of the hidden highlights of the EVO tournament series, not everybody will get good enough to shine on the competitive stage. However, with a bit of practice, you'll be able to pull off some lengthy and complex combos in training mode – and video compilations of those always go down very well on YouTube.



△×□ Surprisingly, subtle details like the facial animations of characters do benefit from the series' move to 3D.

△×□ A close-up look at Kula here shows the lack of detail in *The King Of Fighters XIV*'s character models.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ▲ A huge roster of 50 characters will offer a fighter to suit every kind of player.
- Three-on-three battles give each match a great sense of variety and strategy.
- × Up to six players can compete in a single online match, allowing more players to join in.
- New systems add depth for experts, while casuals get an auto-combo system.

It might not be the prettiest or most technically-advanced game on the PS4, but it's instantly recognisable as a *King Of Fighters* game.

There are still some questions to be answered about *The King Of Fighters XIV*. For example, we don't yet know what kind of single-player content is available, if there is any at all – and after *Street Fighter V*'s bare-bones launch, it appears that more people care about that than developers may have expected. Likewise, there's a new Rush auto-combo system similar to that of the *Persona 4 Arena* games, which could increase the appeal to new players but may have major repercussions if not correctly balanced. For now though, we're hopeful that this will be the 3D *King Of Fighters* that finally gets it right.

Nick Thorpe

THE KING OF FIGHTERS XIV is currently being trained for its comeback fight by SNK Playmore. Check the website for more details: snkplaymore.co.jp/us/games/kof-xiv/



PREVIEW

MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST

PS4

ANATOMY OF... FAITH

A new city; a new story; a new Faith – Mirror's Edge Catalyst reintroduces us to the outlaw courier trying to overthrow a totalitarian regime...

SURVIVOR

Faith's backstory in the new *Mirror's Edge* resembles the one established in the original game. Her parents and sister were killed during the November Riots, which took place in opposition to the Conglomerate, and she was taken in by Noah, who trained her to be a runner (though we're betting we'll find out her sister survived). Faith has a reputation for rebelliousness and an understandable distaste for the Conglomerate.

MARTIAL ARTIST

Faith has decided to lay down her arms in this version of *Mirror's Edge*, which is good news as the gunplay in the first game was rubbish. You're often best running from conflict rather than engaging in it, but if you do have to mix it up, Faith can use her skills to take out enemies, performing wall kicks and leaping punches that pack the full force of her momentum.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Faith is a runner, which kind of makes her like an activist Yodel driver. In order to circumvent the controls of the regime in which she lives, Faith delivers packages, leaping between buildings and running up walls to get to her destination and to deliver whatever the Conglomerate that controls the city doesn't want her to deliver in a quest to bring them down.

GLASS HOUSES

'City Of Glass' isn't just a name for the place that Faith lives and works in – it's an indication of the clean, minimalist style that defines it. The city is free for you to explore, meaning you have more options in picking your route towards a destination. To help with that, climbable objects will be highlighted in red, allowing you to make quick decisions, rather than losing your flow.

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The Surge

Stark Souls

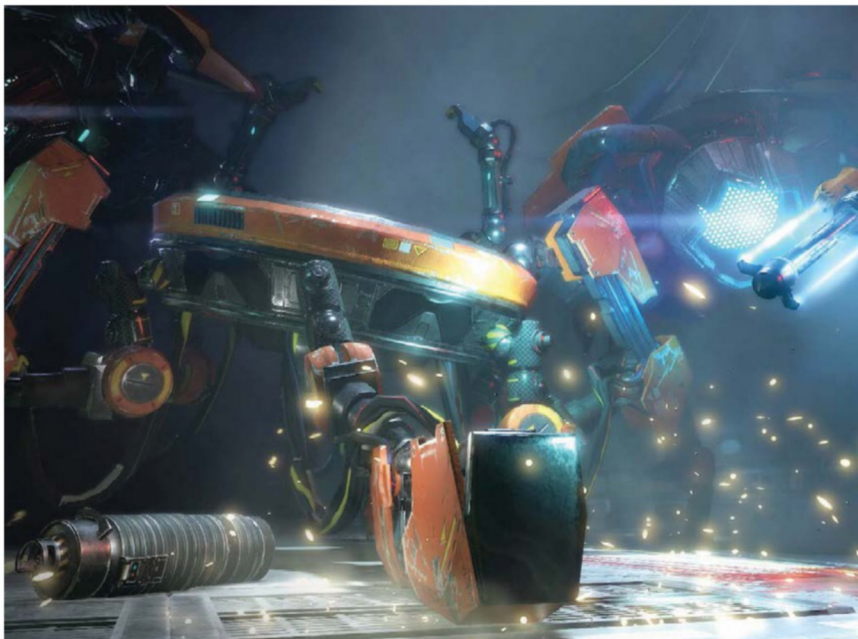


IMAGINE YOUR IDYLIC future.

You lounge, supine, on the neon chaise longue in the living room of your penthouse (everyone lives in penthouses in the future, even people on the ground floor), idly flicking through your copy of **Play**. No work for you today: robots do all that now. As you sip your favourite beverage prepared perfectly by your attentive robo-butler (and lover), you remark on how much better written and more engaging you find **Play** since robots started writing that, too. 'Ah, robots,' you think wistfully, as you drift off for your second mid-morning nap.

You are roused by a nightmare. The robots! They've turned against humanity! Terror seizes your chest. Sweat pours down your face. You turn, gasping, to your robo-slave to ask it to dispense a pre-warmed towel for your brow. Your robot punches its fist through your head and throws you from the balcony, your body tumbling down the mountain of human corpses that have piled up in the street. It wasn't a dream.

Any or none of this may happen in *The Surge*, the third-person robo-pocalypse from Deck13, best known for 2014's *Dark Souls* clone, *Lords Of the Fallen*. In the future, all of the technologies that now



was just looking forward to his first day in a new job doing future engineering stuff with an arsenal of mid-21st-Century power tools, when suddenly something mysterious and terrible happens to the facility's machines. All your colleagues die, and then their corpses start charging up to you



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"YOU CAN PICK UP THE PLATING FROM THOSE ARMS AND FASHION YOURSELF A PIECE OF ARMOUR, BECAUSE EVERYONE IN THE FUTURE RECYCLES"

make up column inches in tech blogs have been developed and put it into regular use. Humanity has ceded control of itself to an army of machines, or at least to an army of blue-collar workers whirling around factories in exo suits.

This is where you come in. Quite literally. For you are a not un-Isaac-Clarke-ian future engineer who

and trying to kill you with repurposed construction equipment and other pointy objects.

But job security being what it is in the automated future, you're not one for quitting. Instead, you battle against your former coworkers in your own exo suit, dodging and parrying their attacks and looking for weak spots in their armour against

SCRAPHEAP CHALLENGE

Think Katamari, but brutal

There are no ready-made suits of power armour to climb into in *The Surge* – you're a factory worker, not a gruff veteran space marine. Instead, your gear gets grafted on piece-by-piece, making each player's character a gunmetal mishmash of whatever they last hacked off a wounded enemy. Think of it like buying armour from the world's bloodiest charity shop – tear things off of someone's torso and you never know what you might find!



ΔOX□ Barring the spiderbot, most of the enemies we've seen are the reanimated, exo-suited corpses of your former colleagues.

ΔOX□ As in *Lords Of The Fallen*, even a single, low-level enemy can batter you half – or all the way – to death. Remember: watch, learn, dismember.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ▲ Deck13 is trying to paint a picture of our world decades in the future.
- As in *Dead Space*, you're just a really unfortunate lowly blue collar worker.
- ✕ Again, like *Dead Space*, *The Surge*'s combat is all about looking an enemy's weak spots.
- A fight with a multi-limbed robot was the high point of the demo we played.

which to deliver your own gruesome brand of anti-maintenance. As you spar with an opponent, you target the parts of their bodies which are most vulnerable with the analogue stick, swinging electrified lances and other kit to drop their health low enough to deliver a brutal finishing move – like knocking them to their knees and hacking off their arms. Then you can pick up the plating from those arms and fashion yourself a piece of armour, because everyone in the future recycles.

The hands-off demo we're shown by publisher Focus Interactive is short, but the *Lords Of The Fallen* DNA twists through everything. There's the *Dark Souls*-y combat, the clear character and enemy design and – naturally – a boss fight at the end, where a flying, spider-like disposal robot drops down into a hangar and starts flailing at you with its legs and blasting you with spouts of flame. And like *Lords*' bosses, the trick is to find the balance between walloping it with your weapon and knowing when to jump as far as you can out

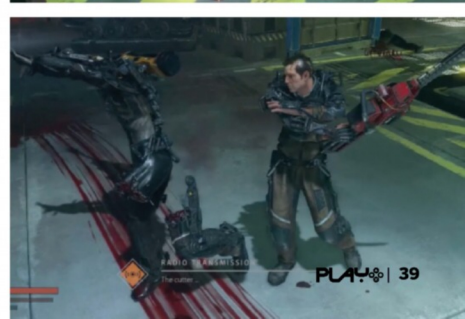
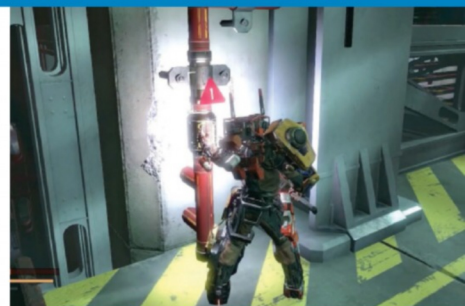
of the way. We can't help but smile when the chap demoing this section got squashed to death as the spiderbot thumped down on top of him.

But there are also hints of *Deus Ex* woven into *The Surge*, with multiple paths through the more open areas. Between these and the locked doors, which need a certain level of expertise to unlock, the idea is to keep players backtracking to pick up story clues and loot that they were too low-level to scavenge on their first pass through.

We'll need to see more of this exploration – what we've been shown is a proof of concept, with limited choices and not much story beyond 'robots are bad so cut off their legs'. But if Deck13 can pull off a *Lords-Of-The-Fallen-meets-Deus-Ex*, chuck us an electric sword and we'll see you in the vents.

Rich Wordsworth

THE SURGE is running around Deck13 murdering all the fine people that work there. Head on over to its website for more details: thesurge-game.com.



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Dangerous Golf

Criterion Games alumni try out a different kind of driving



IT'S NOT OFTEN that you get to wallop a golf ball through a collection of irreplaceable antiques, then blow it up and ricochet it off a few priceless suits of armour. In fact, we've only had one such opportunity, when new developer Three Fields Entertainment – founded by Criterion's Alex Ward and Fiona Sperry and staffed by various *Burnout* veterans, among other talented souls – invited us to pop up to its studio and have a go on its latest game. The name says it all, really – just as *Burnout* took the racing genre and offered an explosive new twist on the formula, *Dangerous Golf* replaces fairways with hallways, lined with all manner of breakables, and invites you to see just how much damage you can do with a single volatile golf ball.

Groundbreaking physics-based destruction was what Three Fields was looking to experiment with when starting the project – a logical stepping stone if the team is ever to return to aggressive racing in this more technologically advanced age – and after being shown all manner of physics demos and work-in-progress builds, it all makes sense. Well, it made sense before, because there's nothing particularly confusing about smashing shit up, but the actual reasoning behind doing the game is now all the clearer to us. It's far more than a playable tech demo, though – simple mechanics, an easy-to-learn scoring system and a quick-fire gameplay loop all conspire to make this an addictive score attack game. The sporting equivalent of *Burnout*'s excellent Crash mode, if you will.

The game takes quite a lot of cues from *Crash*, in terms of presentation, structure and gameplay. Each 'hole' plays out over the course of three shots, and they all have their own nuances. The drive off the tee is the simplest shot of the lot, a powerful blast where all you need to do is aim and pull the trigger. There are no clubs or gauges to worry about, and control is as simple as flicking a stick – the shoulder buttons act as modifiers to add or reduce power on the shot, but that's it. You can have the camera zoom to the hole's most valuable item to help you line this up, but a straight shot at

make reaching awkward targets or lining up complex combos look easy. Most of your points will come in this phase, setting up for the final putt. Even here, there's room for flair – a safe tap-in will bank your score, sure, but a final trick shot will earn you a bunch more points.

While the action itself may be straightforward, what's going on behind the scenes is far from simple. This physics engine is awesome. Pound a shot into a shelving unit and it'll spill its contents; hit a powerful bounce under a table and the ball will belt the underside to rattle objects above; debris from an impact can cascade into other

breakables, making a single well-placed touch enough to destroy a stack of items. Optional slow-motion during the Smashbreaker phase lets you pore over this as it happens, with a Crash-esque panning shot after the hole letting

you revel in the aftermath.

While the promise of new mechanics being layered on as you progress is certainly interesting, our main concern is that we'll have the same thing we've had with many great score attack games in the past – we'll likely get too embroiled in topping the leaderboards on the first couple of holes to ever even see the later ones. But then again, if our main worry about a game is that we might enjoy it *too much*, it's probably safe to say that it's on the right track.

Luke Albigés

“THE SPORTING EQUIVALENT OF BURNOUT'S EXCELLENT CRASH MODE, IF YOU WILL”

the target is never going to be the best option. Instead, ping the ball off walls, furniture and other breakables en route to the target is the better play, especially since this will also help you build up your Smashbreaker.

By destroying a certain number of objects with your drive, the second phase comes into play and it's one that will be familiar to anyone who has caused a mass pile-up in a *Burnout* game. Your second touch of the ball comes in the form of the Smashbreaker, which sees you blow up the ball to send it flying in the direction of your choosing while granting you loose control over the flaming sphere while in flight. This is where the skill element of the game will come into play, as you can alter the trajectory just enough to

DANGEROUS GOLF is being bounced off all kinds of things by the crazy folks at Three Fields Entertainment. See the carnage for yourself: threefieldsentertainment.com/





WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

-  The destruction is something else, making every shot a satisfying explosion of debris.
-  Criterion veterans are putting their expertise in the field of breaking stuff to excellent use.
-  Quick and simple gameplay is easy to pick up yet endlessly replayable.
-  Breaking expensive things in a glorious physics engine will never *not* be fun.



 Controls are most complex during a Smashbreaker, since you can steer, slam and slow the ball as you see fit.

Instant Expert

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Boundless

IT'S LIKE MINECRAFT

To call *Boundless* a *Minecraft* clone would be unfair and doesn't represent what the game is, but there are similarities between the two games. As with *Minecraft*, this is a game where you explore the world, harvest your own supplies, and then use those resources as you work alone or alongside friends to build whatever creations you can pull from your imagination.

EVERYTHING'S CONNECTED

Perhaps the thing that makes *Boundless* stand out the most from *Minecraft* is how connected it is. Rather than every player's world existing only for them and any friends they invite in, each world in *Boundless* is tied together as one universe by virtue of the fact that you can travel between them using portals. This means that you must claim any land you wish to mark as yours using beacons.

BECOME A HUNTER

Boundless' connected nature allows you to specialise in performing a particular role. You can focus on crafting tools and work as a builder for other players for cash; collect creatures and charge for entry into your own space zoo; specialise as a trader, using your profits to pay others to do your work for you; or become a mercenary hunter that makes a living taking down Titans.

TAKE DOWN TITANS

Throughout *Boundless*, you'll come across huge boss-like structures called Titans. These will be swarming with enemies and traps, so you'll want some decent gear and some friends to back you up if you're going to scale them and try and take them down. Succeed, and your reward will be fame, loot, experience and some of the most precious technology you can find in the game.

UPGRADE YOUR TECH

The grappling hook looks to be one of the key pieces of tech you have access to in *Boundless*, allowing you to scale tall structures. We also know that you can build traps to protect your creations and can use the tech that you scavenge from defeated Titans to build your own flying contraptions, which we imagine is going to be one of the most sought-after pieces of technology in the game.

WHAT IS WONDERSTRUCK?



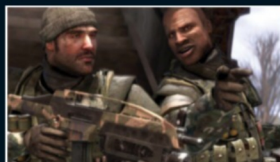
Wonderstruck, the team making *Boundless*, has two released games behind it. The first of those is a colourful free-to-play tower defence game called *Polycraft* that you can play in a web browser.



The team followed up on *Polycraft* with *The Marvellous Miss Take*. This is a stealth title that, uncharacteristically for the genre, encourages you to play with speed, rather than have you cower in the shadows.



That's not the team's only pedigree, though. Wonderstruck was founded by ex-Lionhead and EA developers, meaning that the likes of *Fable II*, *Battlefield Bad Company* and *Spore* can be found on their collective CVs.



Boundless is clearly the most ambitious thing the studio has attempted, but with triple-A experience behind it and a couple of its own releases on the books, hopefully it has what it takes to pull it off.

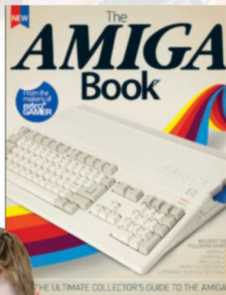
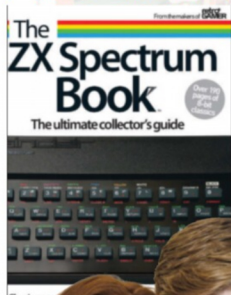
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PREVIEW

A quick look at some of the other awesome games that are just around the corner

1 DUNGEONS 2

FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: 26 MARCH

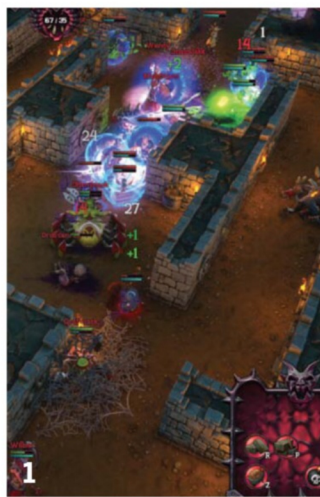
GIVEN THAT THE *Dungeon Keeper* series has now entered the realm of mobile hell, courtesy of EA's notorious free-to-play disaster, someone else may as well take up the mantle. That's precisely what *Dungeons 2* is doing. And when we say 'precisely', we mean *precisely* – you've got a disembodied hand that you use to control your evil minions, imps that mine gold, a grid-based dungeon building system, and lots of heroes to kill. In other words, the game is *Dungeon Keeper* in everything but name. That's no bad thing in our book. It's worth noting, though, that *Dungeons 2* is a little different in that you must take your minions out of the dungeon to invade the lands above, too.

2 CARMAGEDDON: MAX DAMAGE

FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2016

WE DON'T THINK there's ever been another racing game quite like *Carmageddon*, by which we mean, a game where nobody actually *races*, but instead mows down pedestrians and smashes up their competitors until they're forced to retire. It's an unashamedly silly game full of ridiculous power-ups and crazy vehicles that turn it into super-violent version of *Wacky Races*. The question to be answered is whether this reimagining of a title that was already a bit shonky in its heyday is going to hold up in 2016. What we've played on PC leaves us a little worried on that front, but we hope the PS4 release can prove us wrong.



3 EA SPORTS UFC 2

FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: 15 MARCH

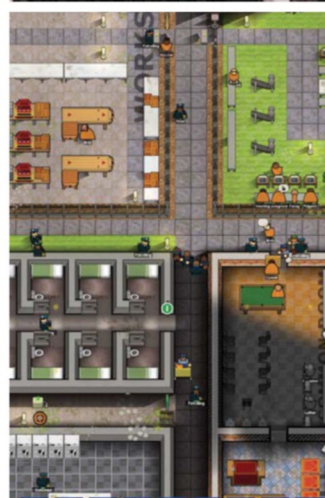
THIS GAME LOOKS like it will cater better both to hardcore fans of MMA and those with only a passing interest in smashing people in the face than the last entry. For the former, EA is promising a more in-depth career mode, a refined physics-based knockout system and, crucially, major improvements to the first entry's weak grappling and submission game. For the more casual fan, there's a KO mode where you can forget about rolling around on the floor trying to make your opponent tap and just wail on each other in ridiculous fist-fights where the objective is to get a predefined number of knockouts – it's like a WWE-style iron man match crossed with *Fight Night* and we approve.

4 HOMEFRONT: THE REVOLUTION

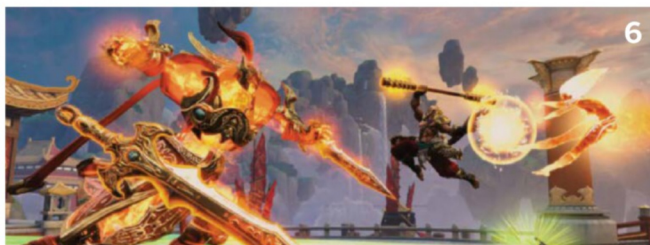
FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: 20 MAY

THERE MUST BE something worthwhile in *Homefront: The Revolution*. Its first developer was closed down with the intention of moving development to THQ Montreal before it was picked up by Crytek UK. Then Deep Silver ended up buying the game due to the financial problems at Crytek and moved development to its own Dambuster Studios. Surely someone would have given up on the game during all that turmoil if there wasn't something good at the core of this guerilla warfare style FPS? Then again, nobody had the sense to let *Duke Nukem* die before *Duke Nukem Forever* happened...



ROUNDUP



6

5 INSURGENCY: SANDSTORM

FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: 2017

THE ORIGINAL INSURGENCY began life as a *Half-Life 2* mod, but grew into a game that won itself a dedicated community on PC. Now the series aims to make the move to consoles with its next entry, *Insurgency: Sandstorm*. Though its team-based battles are comparable to the likes of *COD* in terms of modes and settings, the game is perhaps most similar to *Rainbow Six Siege* in the focus it places on realism, but it goes even beyond that with its weapon behaviour and suppression effects. It's an FPS that does things differently and that means we're pleased to see that it's on its way to PlayStation.



5

7 DANGANRONPA V3: EVERYONE'S NEW SEMESTER OF KILLING

FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2016

WE DON'T YET know whether the third mainline entry in the *Danganronpa* series will get a European release, but the fact that its two predecessors did means it is not unlikely. Developer Spike Chunsoft has said that this game represents something of a fresh start for the series, moving on from the Hope Peak's Academy storyline to establish new characters and settings. We're not fooled, however – it's still going to be about a bunch of students murdering each other.

6 SMITE: BATTLEGROUND OF THE GODS

FORMAT: PS4

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2016

MAKING THE TRANSITION from PC to console isn't an easy thing to do, but *Smite*'s already managed to do that, making the game work on that other console, and it is now coming to PS4. *Smite* is much more accessible than the notoriously unfriendly *League Of Legends* and *Dota 2* and with a number of different modes for you to try, such as 5v5, 3v3 and an Arena mode (basically team deathmatch). *Smite* could prove to be a great way into the genre for those of you that have not made the plunge into the world of MOBAs before.

8 PRISON ARCHITECT

FORMAT: PS4, VITA

RELEASE DATE: 3 JUNE

THINK THEME HOSPITAL in prison, or, if you prefer, *The Escapists* from the other perspective, and you're approaching an understanding of what *Prison Architect* is. The game tasks you with building and managing your own prison facility – hiring and firing staff, connecting utilities, setting the prisoners schedules, and so on. The aim isn't only to keep the prisoners in, but to maintain order, reduce repeat-offender rates and keep finances in check. It doesn't seem like a game that's suited for a controller, but hopefully Introversion can find a way to make it work.



8

PLAY 

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HOT TOPIC

DELAYS

DREW SLEEP
PRODUCTION EDITOR, PLAY

"IT'S EASIER TO BEMOAN
THAN TO UNDERSTAND"



HI THERE! I'M the guy who makes sure that **Play** gets sent off to the printers, and that means managing the deadlines. So it's safe to say I know a thing or two about making a product and shipping it to a deadline. Making a magazine shares some similarities with making a game, structure-wise. We have milestones, we have deadlines on top of deadlines to meet, and, of course, sometimes shit goes south. People get ill and can't respond to phonecalls, review copies get lost in the post because the courier accidentally opened a portal to the Netherzone and sometime the E3 Of Dreams just drops on our lap a few days before we go to print – you can't control these things.

The same can be said when making a game and, because making games rather than writing about them is so much more complicated, a delay can only be a good thing. A delay is a sign that both the developer and publisher have gone, 'Look, something has come up and we can't make the best game possible in the timeframe we originally had. We need more time to do this *right*.' At what point is this seen as a bad thing?

Delays have this stigma, like 'they're a sign that things are not all well at XYZ developer



and the game is going to be bad.' While that sometimes may be the case – like with *Duke Nukem Forever*, for example – a lot of the time, a delay is a sign that things aren't being rushed and actual thought is going into development. What would *Bloodborne* be like if From Software rushed through whatever issues it was facing and it delivered on its original release date? Yarnham could've been a glitchy mess that would resemble *Assassin's Creed Unity* – and not even your worst enemy deserves to sit through a nightmare like that.

It's easier to bemoan than to understand, sure. That's why whenever a news of a delay breaks on Reddit or Twitter, Ye Olde Pitchfork For Angry Mobs store has a damn field day. But imagine you're working on *Uncharted 4* at



Naughty Dog (congratulations, by the way), you're crunching and you're desperate for Sony to grant you more time because you're terrified that the game you'll put out won't be great due to time constraints. Imagine getting that breathing space, that relief, then you look online and you see people complaining that you're game's going to be a f**kshow because you don't know what you're doing and you need time to actually make the damn thing – you've *obviously* been playing leapfrog in the ND office with Neil Druckmann for the last four years. It's not exactly motivational, is it?

The only legitimate reason a delay causes concern is when a game is passed around a bunch of studios like it's radioactive material nobody wants to touch, really – take a look at *Duke Nukem Forever* (again) or *Aliens: Colonial Marines* for some good (or bad, depending on how you look at it) examples. If a developer is granted more time, that decision has not been made off the cuff – it's been considered. Delays are expensive and are only granted if the time is needed. If you get uppity about that, you're maybe a bit too entitled and need to learn the virtue of patience.





JOSH WEST
SENIOR STAFF WRITER, GAMES™

"SOMETHING HAS GONE TERRIBLY WRONG"

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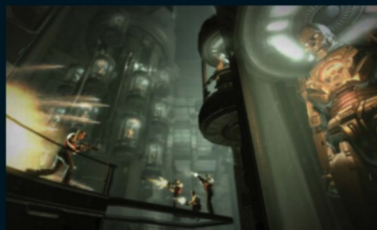


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AS VIDEOGAME ENTHUSIASTS, we are willing to forgive a fair bit of arsing about from the major publishers. The apologists will always repeat *Mario* maker Shigeru Miyamoto's famous quote, "A delayed game is eventually good, but a rushed game is forever bad," in response to anybody bemoaning the pushing back of a release date.

Well I say ballocks to that. Clearly those people didn't spend the better part of a decade waiting to play *Duke Nukem Forever* – a game that by no means had a rushed development cycle, and following it was akin to watching paint dry in a time stutter.

Sure, some games do benefit from a delay, but it rarely works in the best interest of publishers, the developers or – most importantly – the players. Look at *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*, for example. The delay doesn't necessarily mean that the upcoming blockbuster was more ambitious than Naughty Dog had originally intended – as the studio will so often contend – but could suggest that the project has essentially been subjected to disastrous mismanagement. And who suffers? Oh, the players, of course.



AOXO The Division had a storied history of being delayed, and delayed again. Were they justified? Turn to page 64 and find out.

Because of the power of hype, the enjoyment you take from a game is very largely weighed up against the anticipation you initially had for it. Was *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* really a good game? Or was it simply better than you expected after *Unity* was so horribly disappointing? Hype is an important and (integrally) an unquantifiable metric.

Hype and anticipation also take a hit every time a game is delayed; that can begin to create discontent in an audience that has so fervently followed a game from announcement to pre-order. That's your right, of course, but have you ever found yourself placing delayed games under an magnified scope? *Watch Dogs* didn't survive such a fate, but was that fair?

Delays can affect every facet of a game's development and even the future of franchises. That exhausting marketing plan that you always get sucked into is there for a reason, and having it extended is never good for any of the parties involved. Especially when a publisher starts having to siphon potential profits into extending a PR push – which can cost millions – and therefore likely impacting on the budgets of future releases.



When a game is delayed, it means something has gone terribly wrong. Whether it's a developer not managing its time or budget properly, or just being unrealistic with the amount of time it will take to complete a project, it's bad practice. You'll probably be happy when you get to play *Mankind Divided* and *Uncharted 4* – they may even be great games – but I guarantee you're preparing yourself for the worst. Preparing to have the wah-wahs on a forum, Twitter or Reddit about the first thing you find that's wrong, and picking out the delay as to why it should have been fixed before launch. And I bet you wouldn't have cared quite as much originally – if only the game had released on time in the first place.

MAKING A MASTERPIECE

THE STORY OF THE WITNESS

Jonathan Blow has, once again, created an indie blockbuster.
Paul Walker-Emig goes behind the scenes to find out how...



The Witness is one of those rare games that reaches out from behind the screen to consume your mental space, leaving you obsessing over solutions and theories even when you're away from the game. It also invades your physical space, as you surround yourself with scrawled notes and meandering hand-drawn lines designed to help you crack the game's devious puzzles and uncover the secrets of its island. Given that the act of playing the game encourages an oscillating relationship between the mental aspect of figuring something out and the physical act of sketching a solution, it's somewhat fitting that *The Witness* was born in the same way. "I actually started *The Witness* before *Braid* was done," developer Jonathan Blow tells us, referring to the debut game that won him his reputation. "I had basic ideas and I started drawing the design of some things on paper.

"The design focus is on the transition in your mind between not understanding something and then

understanding something," Blow explains, describing the series of eureka-like moments that make *The Witness* so compelling. "I picked up on that because back in *Braid*, the puzzles ended up having that kind of a character. It wasn't like puzzles were a hundred steps and you had to figure out the steps," he continues. "You're standing there and you're like, 'I don't know what to do at all,' and then you know what to do. I wanted to distill that down into something even simpler that didn't rely on relatively complex game mechanics, which is why *The Witness* has a very simple system where you walk, or you have this 2D panel in your face and that's basically it. There's no jumping, there's no interaction with other objects in the world, and that allowed me to just focus on that mental transition."

Despite being enamored with the idea, Blow almost abandoned it before he even got started. "I was looking at this game and thinking implicitly that I would have to do it the same way I

"I ACTUALLY STARTED THE WITNESS BEFORE BRAID WAS DONE"



did *Braid*, which was mainly me doing everything with one or two contractors helping out," Blow recalls. "I came to the conclusion that the game was going to be too ambitious and I wouldn't be able to do it." Instead, Blow went off to work on other prototypes, putting most of his work into a 2D RPG that focused on written language. "It was pretty cool," he says, "but I didn't like the idea as much as I liked *The Witness*."

Fortunately for Blow, *Braid* became a far bigger success than he anticipated, giving the veteran developer cause to rethink. "I realised I had enough money to do a bigger project with more people helping," he says, "which meant I *could* do *The Witness*."

Still, everyone told Blow that it was a bad business decision to plough the money he had made from *Braid* into the project, so he took their advice and went to publishers first. His experience gives us an interesting insight into how slow the industry was to adapt to the world we now live in, where indies can share the stage with big budget games.

"People look back and think 2008 and 2009 was when all these indie games started being big and successful, and that's true, but that was still a new thing," Blow says. "Digital games were [seen as] little things and publishers were very slow to adjust to that." Blow explains that this meant that while there were plenty of publishers that wanted to talk to him, the deals they were offering wouldn't allow him to make the game he wanted.

"I kept getting offered these old world kinds of deals where they owned the IP, or could demand what was in the game, or when it would come out, because they were so used to getting those kinds of terms from people who needed the money and needed to get to retail," he explains. "They were just not mentally equipped for this world where people don't necessarily need to sign a deal with them."

That's why, in the end, Blow decided to risk everything, to ignore the advice he had been given, and put the money he had earned from *Braid* into the



project to retain control, believing that the idea was worth it.

Fast-forward to 2013 and Blow has used that cash to put together a small team. The game is progressing well, but is clearly far from finished. Not a big issue, until Blow receives an important call. "Sony invited us to come be in its console launch, which was a very big deal," Blow tells us. "To my knowledge, an indie developer had never been in a console launch show before, so there was this mission statement: we have to be able to stand up on stage and show a trailer alongside games with I don't know how big a budget – \$50 million, \$100 million – and we don't have to look triple-A, but we have to not look shitty. We have to stand on the same field as those games."

It was a great opportunity, but there was a problem. "Sony only gave us two weeks of warning and we can't just make a trailer because the areas in the game don't look nice enough, so starting today, we have to make enough areas look nice so that we can

build a trailer out of it; the stopwatch starts now: go!"

Blow explains that at that point, he knew he wanted saturated colours and simple surfaces in order to showcase the game's lighting, but, in his own words, "that still doesn't really determine the style, that's just the high level ideas that help you get to the style". With the clock ticking, the team had very little time to work out what those high-level ideas meant in practice. "That was a very intense time," Blow recalls, "but it was great because we really saw the visuals of the game come together. By the end of that two weeks, it was like, 'Alright, this is the visual identity of the game, these things look beautiful, all we have to do is make the rest of the game look like this!'"

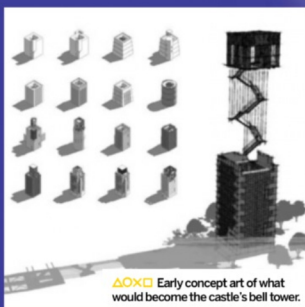
That doesn't mean things were plain sailing. After all, along with that trailer the team had worked so hard to produce, *The Witness* was announced as a launch window title for the PS4, but it was another *three years* before we actually got to play it. There are a



number of factors that account for the delay – the team tried three or four approaches to the game's story, for example, Blow eventually paring it back to be as subtle as possible to support the game's mood of discovery – but, in talking to Blow, it becomes clear that a large reason for the game's extended development time is his fastidious attention to detail and a determination not to compromise on his vision.

"We could have pushed the game out a couple of years ago, because it's been playable since 2010," Blow reveals. "It just wouldn't have been as good as it is."

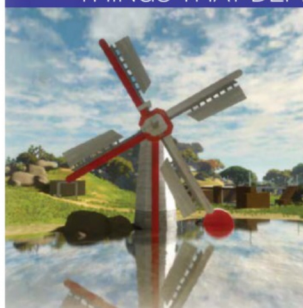
Blow talks about wanting the game to live up to close scrutiny, even as it increased in ambition as he realised what he could achieve with his small team. If players went looking in a little corner, he wanted them to find something interesting there, even if it was just a little perspective trick. Putting all those details in a game that had increased in ambition, of course, means more time was spent.



ΔΟΧΔ From the forest to the desert, you can recognise the structure of the game even in this early stage.



"WE'RE BUILDING THIS WORLD WITH ALL THESE THINGS THAT DEPEND ON ONE ANOTHER"



ΔΟΧΔ You'll recognise this as an early incarnation of the desert temple.



Speaking of perspective, anyone who has played *The Witness* will know just how vital that is to the way the experience works and won't be surprised to hear that this meant the game had to be very finely balanced.

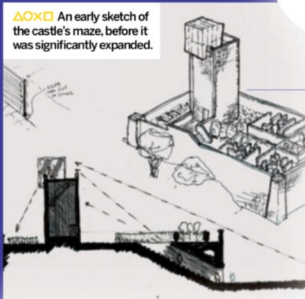
"We're building this world with all these things that depend on one another very heavily and you could break a puzzle just by making a wrong aesthetic choice in the art style." Blow explains, "because now you're pulling someone's attention away from the things that are relevant to solving that puzzle. Suddenly, the colour of something is game design, or what the shader is on particular objects is now game design. That's not new," Blow continues. "That's true for every game, whether the designer understands it or not. However, in this game, it was especially sensitive. We spent a long time saying, 'This thing has to be a different colour, this thing can't have as much geometric detail as you gave it,' in order to make the puzzles more solvable. That's the kind of work that I

LAY OF THE LAND

A lot of care and attention went into creating the *The Witness*. The architecture, geology and flora of the island were considered and crafted with help from reference photography, sketches, maps and reports from architects



ΔOXID An early sketch of the castle's maze, before it was significantly expanded.



"I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN WHY IT WAS GOOD WITHOUT SPOILING THE GAME"



ΔOXID Jonathan Blow thinking about how to torture our minds.

don't think anyone playing the game consciously notices because, if it goes well, you're not distracted, but we actually did a huge amount of that."

The careful crafting of the game's world and puzzles and their codependency on each other frequently caused problems during development. "You make edits to some area, like, 'Oh I just want to edit this building,' and then you make sure everything in the building works and

then it turns out you broke something in a neighbouring area because you didn't think about how that interacts with this one," says Blow. "There are a lot of complex interactions."

All those problems directly related to the game's design were eventually overcome, but there was one problem that Blow could never satisfactorily address ahead of release: how do you explain what's good about a game that depends on something that can

only happen in your own mind? A not-insignificant problem given that Blow had put all his cash into this game and needed it to do well.

Blow tells us that he saw the reaction on the internet, the commenters saying, 'this just looks like a lot of stupid maze puzzles'. He spent a day giving presentations in a theatre at E3, realising that what he was saying wasn't really connecting with his audience. "I didn't know how to

explain why it was good," says Blow, "especially without spoiling the game." But even if he were to spoil the game, Blow was acutely aware that walking someone through puzzles and explaining how they create moments of epiphany in your brain isn't the same as experiencing it. There was no way around that. Blow would just have to release the game and hope for the best.

We now know that the game was a commercial and critical success. Blow telling us that he has been both surprised and delighted by its reception. But what is significant to us is that when Blow *didn't* know that would be the case, he stuck steadfastly to the vision he had when he first sketched out *The Witness* on a piece of paper. We wonder how many developers would maintain that commitment, especially after the negative feedback. Would there not be too great a temptation to move on from the mazes, lest your players get bored?

"I was worried about that," Blow reveals. "But I didn't let that prevent me from doing the good things that I saw in the game design. The question is: do I allow myself to dilute the strength and the simplicity of those things because I'm afraid that people won't get it or that they will never even play long enough to see what's good about it because they just come to the premature conclusion that it's just doing a bunch of little mazes?"

The answer, evidently, is no. That, we think, is what makes Blow so interesting and *The Witness* as a game so successful: the uncompromising commitment to an idea.

THE WITNESS' EVOLUTION

These early shots of *The Witness* give a fascinating look at the way that the island has changed over time, though it's recognisable even in its early forms...



"It always starts with an idea," Blow replies when we ask about his approach to design. "But then I do go into the mechanics and explore them and try and figure out what's naturally there. If you've found something really nice that doesn't get along with your idea at all, maybe you either change the idea, or you save it for the next game, because you want a thing that feels like it has integrity, that works as a whole."

We see that integrity in *The Witness*. There are so many things that could have compromised it – publisher pressure; Blow's financial concerns; tough design choices; the delay; the indifference the game faced – but Blow never allowed that to happen.

Will we see that integrity in his next game? Well, like all his games, it has already started with an idea. "It probably won't be a puzzle game," says Blow. "I can tell you that."

REVISITED



PS4'S BIGGEST GAMES

Good things come, they say, to those who wait. While it's true that not every game is perfect on launch day, just how far have PS4's best and brightest come since release?





DESTINY

WHAT'S NEW?

Two modest expansions (*The Dark Below*, *House Of Wolves*) and one larger one (*The Taken King*), plus numerous smaller updates and regular seasonal events.

THE STORY SO FAR

Bungie really can't seem to win with *Destiny*. In the vanilla game, and later *The Dark Below*, criticism was rife that reaching level cap without a lot of time and luck on your side was nigh impossible... but when that was addressed in *House Of Wolves*, it was all of a sudden too easy to cap out a Guardian. *The Taken King*'s quality also served to highlight just how pedestrian earlier content had been, too. The latest expansion is the best thing to have happened to the game and by no small margin, but it frustrates the other way too – we were left wanting more but with no clear plans on what's next for the game, the player base is shrinking as nobody wants to put hours into a character that could be wasted if a sequel hits the reset button. Your move, Bungie...

VERDICT

If you haven't played since launch (or even at all), *The Taken King* is a huge step forward and was even strong enough to convert people who hated the core game. With friends, it's still a superb shooter, especially if you're progressing at much the same rate.



MORTAL KOMBAT X

WHAT'S NEW?

Two Kombat Packs, each adding four new characters, a bunch of extra costumes and a few unexpected extras, like secret finishers.

THE STORY SO FAR

Mortal Kombat X was an interesting proposition at launch – while it seemed like the shrunken roster was a step back from previous games, offering three unique variants of each fighter (many of whom played completely differently) meant that the potential for different match-ups had grown massively. DLC culture did manage to sully things a little, with returning series boss Goro locked behind a paywall unless you pre-ordered, yet still present on the character select screen. Still, in terms of features, modes and options, it was one of the most complete fighters we've seen and that hasn't changed a bit – if anything, it's only grown thanks to the eight new kombatants (hey, they started it...) who have since joined the bloody fracas.

VERDICT

Buying the core game plus two season passes could make returning to *MK* pricey, although the mid-price XL version alleviates that worry for anyone looking to get on board today.

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

WHAT'S NEW?

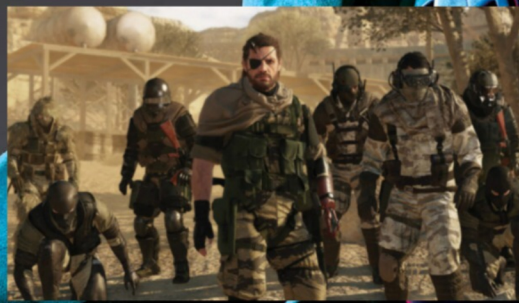
Konami didn't add Metal Gear Online until after launch, and that side of the game has seen several content drops so far.

THE STORY SO FAR

With the single-player game being huge, it took us ages to come to the conclusion that Kojima either forgot how to end games properly or the team simply ran out of time and money to complete the Chapter Three the game cries out for. While it's unlikely that we'll ever get closure there now that Kojima and Konami aren't friends any more, at least the online modes are good now the servers have settled. Paid content is reasonably priced, giving fans a reason to stick around but other monetisation options proved to be less appealing – forking out for extra FOBs only to have sneaky bastards come and pick the things clean isn't something we'll be doing any time soon, but Konami offering a paid insurance service for bases was one of the most cynical pieces of monetisation we've ever seen.

VERDICT

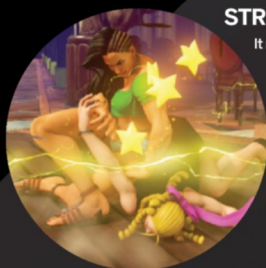
It plays amazingly, so turn a blind eye to the vile microtransactions, if you can.



ONES TO WATCH There's plenty more in store for these little beauties...

STREET FIGHTER V

It might have been a pretty bare-bones package at launch but Capcom has been very open in detailing its roadmap for new content, which will add new characters, modes and features to the game pretty much every month for the rest of the year. The bigger ones to look out for are the full story mode in June and an online revamp. Better yet, all gameplay DLC such as characters can be unlocked with in-game currency. Cheers, Capcom!



ROCK BAND 4

Fans were quick to notice that a bunch of popular features didn't make it into the new game at launch, but Harmonix has made great strides in addressing such criticism of *Rock Band 4*. New modes and refinements are already in and good to go, legacy DLC support is in a much better place than it was at launch and there are even new high-profile tracks being added on a regular basis. A couple more solid updates and it could become the best of the lot.



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

WHAT'S NEW?

Regular small free DLC drops such as costumes, skins and quests plus one expansion in the form of *Hearts Of Stone* and a larger one, *Blood And Wine*, due shortly.

THE STORY SO FAR

We'd argue that CD Projekt Red's outstanding RPG didn't even need additional content – aside from a few bug fixes and quality of life improvements, the core game could hardly be said to be wanting for anything. Indeed, as you chip away at various in-depth quest lines, it feels like you'll never get through it all, as if there's even *too much* content for most players to be able to get through. Still, CDPR's ongoing support has been commendable, offering smaller free packs and updates

for everyone while delivering meatier expansions for those who have the time to actually get it all done. It seems like there'll be even more coming after *Blood And Wine*, too – the team has promised additional support for the game, since *Cyberpunk* is unlikely to arrive any time soon.

VERDICT

We loved it at launch and a few patches later, it's even better mechanically and now positively drowning in stuff to do. There's close to 100 hours' worth of game just in terms of base content, with the paid extras there should you ever come close to finishing all that.



FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN

WHAT'S NEW?

Numerous free updates that add substantial amounts of new gear and content plus one huge expansion, *Heavensward* – a massive chunk of game that ups the level cap and adds three new Jobs and tons of dungeons and missions.

THE STORY SO FAR

We've been playing this on console on and off ever since it entered beta on PS3 and to see how far the game has come is simply incredible. That's the benefit of the subscription model, really – it allows Square to make its big content drops (which happen every two or three months) feel really substantial. We've had brand new dungeons, raids and trials, a whole new Class and Job in the form of Rogue/Ninja, quirky extras like the Gold Saucer and all its entertaining distractions and a ludicrous amount of extra missions tacked onto the end of the main story. The fact that most of these need to be finished before you can even access *Heavensward* content is a little frustrating but knowing that you don't need to pay out for the huge expansion until you're either a) done with the main scenario stuff or b) capped out on a character and looking to push them past 50 and closer to the new cap of 60 as you work towards the endgame content at least means you needn't buy it until you need to.

VERDICT

If you can stomach the monthly subscription fees, you'll struggle to find a better online RPG anywhere today. It's accommodating to newcomers too, with both new and existing features designed to cater to beginners and returning players.

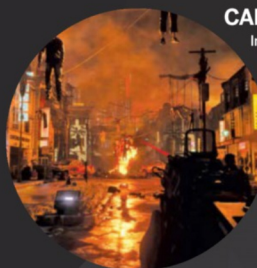
THE DIVISION

There was some concern after seeing the size of the game's map that, like *Destiny* before it, Ubisoft's RPG/shooter hybrid could be starved of content at launch. Still, we know that plenty of new stuff is already coming under the umbrella of a season pass, with potentially even more down the line if the game proves to have legs that can carry it more than a few months. Throw in seasonal events and you're looking at a game that could last a long time.



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III

In the least startling news of all time, a *Call Of Duty* game is getting even more maps. With the mobility options available in this version, though, the freedom of each of these is something we're really looking forward to checking out – any excuse to find a sweet new spot to rack up wall-run kills is okay with us, basically. Expect *Black Ops III* to be supported with regular DLC all the way up to the next game...



ROCKET LEAGUE

WHAT'S NEW?

Additional arenas and game types have all been free, with the team only charging for cosmetic items such as vehicles, skins, boost variants and flags.

THE STORY SO FAR

It looked a little shaky to begin with but Psyonix managed to quickly tackle the server issues that plagued *Rocket League*'s launch when demand massively exceeded expectation. Ever since that one issue was sorted (what a save!), the breakout success has arguably been the perfect role model for how microtransactions and DLC should be handled in a competitive game. New maps and modes have been added periodically for free, with the only money changing hands being for extra vehicles (including classics from the original *Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars*, the DeLorean from *Back To The Future* and the Batmobile, among others) or other cosmetic items. Expect this trend to continue, even over a year after launch.

VERDICT

One of the best competitive experiences on PS4 just keeps getting better, and all without ever putting a dent in wallets beyond the initial asking price (assuming you didn't get it free on PS Plus to begin with).



DIABLO III

WHAT'S NEW?

One major expansion (*Reaper Of Souls*), plus multiple significant free updates and patches that add loads of new gear and content.

THE STORY SO FAR

For a game rooted in mouse control, *Diablo III* fared surprisingly well in its transition to console. Direct character control works well and the limited number of skills means you're never short of buttons, even with the more complex classes. Compared to the PS3 version, the PS4 update also managed to get things running incredibly smoothly, even with four players and all their minions and effects exploding all over the place. *Reaper Of Souls* adds a hell of a lot to the game, with a new class in the Crusader, the endlessly replayable Adventure mode and a huge fifth story chapter, plus a ton of high-level challenges and randomly generated dungeons and an increased level cap and additional abilities for existing characters. It's a bottomless pit of loot, monster hordes and colourful action that continues to improve – Blizzard's ongoing support for the game (hell, it's still updating *Diablo II...*) has been outstanding, meaning you'll never run out of thing to ransack.

VERDICT

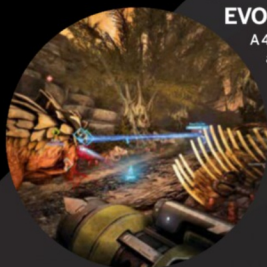
One of the best action-RPGs on the market, *Diablo III* is essential for anyone who likes shiny loot, epic battles, damage numbers and chaotic co-op – it's an absolute riot with friends, but just as compelling solo.

DOWN... BUT NOT OUT A few casualties from the gaming front lines

EVOLVE

A 4v1 multiplayer game is, by its very nature, always going to be extremely unbalanced. But when certain hunters significantly outclassed their peers and one monster – the ridiculous Wraith – stood clearly above other options, it became clear that something was amiss and it just sort of dissolved into a pointless mess. Patches and fixes came, sure... but so did a second season pass. No thanks.

DIAGNOSIS An F2P model might save it.



THE CREW

The scale and concept of Ubisoft's ambitious open world racer had us intrigued but after getting our hands on it, it quickly emerged that the nature of RPG progression simply doesn't lend itself well to driving games – you shouldn't have to 'earn' cars that handle properly. Given that even first-party darling *Driveclub* struggled to recover from a weak launch, this poor little banger stood absolutely no chance.

DIAGNOSIS Dead on arrival.





GRAND THEFT AUTO V

WHAT'S NEW?

The rumoured story DLC is still nowhere to be seen, but GTA Online has been treated to somewhere in the region of 20 content updates, each adding a little more to flesh out your networked life of crime.

THE STORY SO FAR

Rockstar did a fine job porting this over to PS4, with the benefit of having already trialled much of the content on PS3 allowing it to all work pretty much as it should out of the box. A few features did take their sweet time – online heists, for instance – but proved to be worth waiting for. Considering there have been no additional costs, ongoing DLC support has been impressive and although most packs have only offered a few extras, that all adds up over time and *GTA V*'s online suite only continues to improve to this day. We do wonder if the popularity of the mode has caused Rockstar to prioritise adding to this and keeping players engaged over letting them return to the single-player game for a few hours with an expansion – it's clear which will hold player attention for longer.

VERDICT

Don't be daunted by those level 862 clowns running around with the blinged-out arsenals – while it'll be harder today, newcomers and returning players can still rise through the ranks with a little skill.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

With only a few maps per mode and precious little depth to its combat compared to its class-based forerunners, *Battlefront*'s return burned extremely brightly but for nowhere near long enough. Things like the Blu-ray launch of *The Force Awakens* and character/map packs for popular people and places will give it a shot in the arm now and again, mind.

DIAGNOSIS Expect frequent brief recoveries whenever anything *Star Wars* happens.



PLANETSIDE 2

It all comes down to timing. Sony needed to have this up and running on console around launch, giving early adopters a chance to get settled into epic multiplayer FPS battles before the market was saturated, which, by the time the game came out, it already was. Monthly perks and cash for PS Plus subscribers (as Sony did for *Destiny Of Spirits*) could help it, as could greater marketplace visibility.

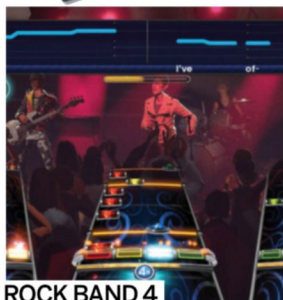
DIAGNOSIS In dire need of marketing.



★★★★★ TEN OF THE BEST ★★★★★

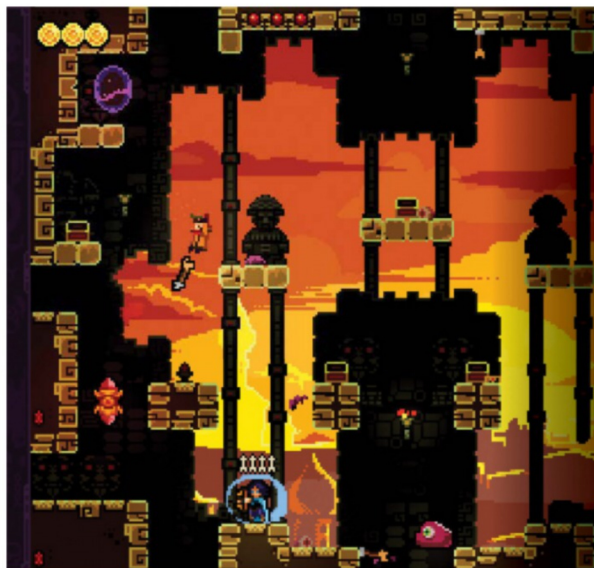
PARTY GAMES

THE MOST FUN YOU CAN HAVE WITH A BUNCH OF FRIENDS ON PLAYSTATION 4



ROCK BAND 4

WHEN YOU'RE HAVING a good time music is often involved, so, therefore, *Rock Band 4* is one of the best games you can play with friends. Get a full band together and you're guaranteed a good time. It's great that the game has now been updated so that it is backwards compatible with songs you might own from past entries in the series – returning fans could have huge track libraries now!



TOWERFALL ASCENSION

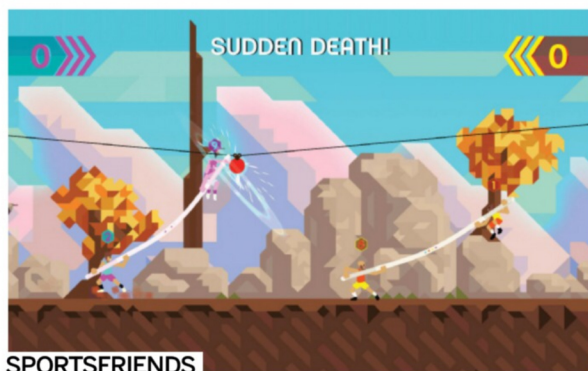
IF THERE WAS an undisputed championship belt for party games, we'd be very tempted to strap it around the waist of *TowerFall Ascension*. Supporting four-player multiplayer battles, *TowerFall Ascension* equips you with a handful of arrows and the ability to stomp on your opponents' heads and pits you against each other in one of the most finely balanced and exciting local multiplayer games of all time. The fact that it is built to create clutch moments (last second dodges that see you steal your opponents arrows out the air always get a reaction) makes it ideal to play with an audience.



ROCKET LEAGUE

BARELY A MONTH goes by in this magazine without us mentioning *Rocket League* – sorry about that, but it's just that damned good – so you probably won't be surprised that it's found its way into our list of the

best party games. Round up four controllers (and friends, obviously), split yourselves into teams of two and get some kind of tournament or league on the go. Just don't forget to spam 'nice shot!' in real life.



SPORTSFRIENDS

SOME OF THE games on this list just happen to be good party games, as well as games that are fun to play alone. *Sportsfriends*, however, is a game that's *for* parties. The package includes BaraBariBall (*Smash Bros.*

crossed with volleyball), Super Pole Riders (a pole vault dueling game), Hokra (an ice hockey-style sports game) and Johann Sebastian Joust (a physical game that you can play with Move controllers or DualShock 4s).

STREET FIGHTER V

THIS BRAWLER IS at its best as a multiplayer game, so whether you want to play winner stays on, or set yourself up a mini-tournament, getting a load of friends round to play *Street Fighter V* is one of the best ways to enjoy the game. It has the added benefit of helping you to refine your skills, testing yourself against different characters and play-styles and getting tips off anyone who is better than you. If you're already really good, then just enjoy bragging about being the best there is.



NIDHOGG

FOR OUR MONEY, *Nidhogg* is the best sword-fighting game you can play, offering up intense back-and-forth battles that make you feel like a fencing god when you are able to clutch victory from the jaws of defeat. Grab some friends and controllers, set up a tournament to compete in and enjoy the fun as heroes and villains emerge from your group, spectators cheering or booing the competitors doing battle in each round.



STARWHAL

ACTING AS AN alternative to *Nidhogg* and supporting up to four players, *Starwhal* is a brilliantly bizarre multiplayer game where you've got to try and pierce the heart of your opponents using the tip of your Starwhal's horn. The Starwhals themselves are a bit unwieldy, but that's deliberate, adding to the fun as you flop around wildly, laughing at your desperate attempts to protect your core and position yourself to get that winning stab.



JUST CAUSE 3

WHEN IT COMES to party games, we had to include at least one pass-the-pad game – a title that you don't have to pay too much attention to and can just piss around with. What better candidate than *Just Cause 3*? With this game, you're going to be about coming up with creative things to do to make your friends laugh, or stupid little challenges that you set for each other. The sky is pretty much the limit with *Just Cause 3*.



PES 2016

CAPITALISE ON THE excitement that will surround Euro 2016 by holding a tournament of your own. Get yourself as many participants as possible, put the names of all the teams in Euro 2016 in a hat and have a random draw to see who plays as what team (don't worry if you get a bad team – your underdog status will get the crowd on your side). If you've got enough players for every team in the tournament, you might not finish the tournament in one sitting, but that's no reason not to do it.



WWE 2K16

IN ISSUE 264, we told you that *WWE 2K16* isn't very good. That's true, *but* it doesn't mean that you can't enjoy it with friends. Put a ladder match on and laugh at the jank together; marvel at the glitches; bemoan the animation. Perhaps the best thing about playing this game with friends, though, is that you can create yourselves and battle against one another. Or do what we did and let the AI control your created characters while you all just sit around and cheer them on.



Bronson

Megan

"TO PLAY IT ALONE
IS TO MISS OUT ON A
LANDMARK IN CO-OP"



Tom Clancy's The Division

The Hype Train finally pulls into Grand Central



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
In-house

PSN PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
MMO

AGE RATING
18+

TWITTER
@TheDivisionGame

Trophies 51



YOU CAN'T PUT a price on excitement, but if you could, *The Division* would be shipping at a price that

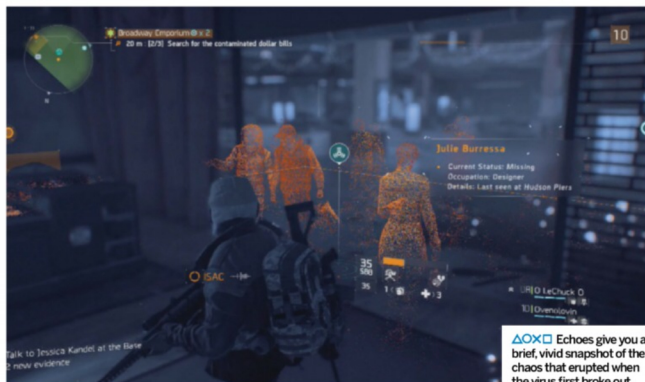
would rival the cost of the hardware required to run it. It's so packed with invigorating content that it exposes Ubisoft's rigid (and much-mocked) development model for what it actually is: a scheme that hampers greatness far more often than it accommodates it. Shorn of the placeholder systems and peripheral 'content' that recent *Far Cry* and *Assassin's Creed* adventures have been riddled with, *The Division* is a mammoth opus that provides something that games of this size and scope so rarely can: consistency.

Although your travels through the devastated Manhattan island are regularly and suddenly interrupted by bouts of optional combat, almost every

mission that you choose to tackle is a work of real ingenuity. Side Missions (and the smaller 'Encounters') rarely feel like grind filler, all of them enhanced by things like unpredictable AI and highly inventive usage of an intricate map. Glorified fetch quests snake through multiple buildings and out over rooftops, sprinkling in a gunfight or two when you least expect it, while hostage rescue missions turn abandoned stores and apartment blocks into puzzles hiding both keys and captive citizens. If you've ever stared blankly into the distance midway through a sandbox fetch quest and wondered what the hell you're doing with your life, you're not alone. And *The Division* won't make you feel like that.

However, considering the plot's fascinating origins, it's disappointing to encounter such rote, uninspired

storytelling and such insanely clichéd dialogue. Inspired by results garnered from a bioterrorism drill that was conducted by the US government in 2001, *The Division's* chilling real-life framework is used to spin yet another hunk of fire and brimstone nonsense about heroic citizens standing up to factions of stark raving lunatics. It's difficult to get too angry at a blockbuster action romp for devolving into cartoon idiocy so quickly – it's practically a genre proviso, after all – but the lack of edginess and narrative subversion stands as a genuine disappointment. The game's opening cutscene – grim and stylised broadcast-style coverage of the evolution of the catastrophe – not only seems to have been ripped out of an entirely different game, it seems to have been beamed in from another planet.



In the heat of one of the game's unpredictable skirmishes, though, it is impossible to care about the plot. From the off, *The Division* does not stop delivering action sequences of a high calibre; honing tactical systems and upending genre staples so astutely that it feels like a remix of every third-person shooter that existed before it. An example: in every situation aside from when you're being rushed in a sudden unforeseen ambush, hand grenades appear to be useless. Because you can't cook them their usage initially follows the same pattern: you throw one, your target moves, nobody gets hurt. But you are never supposed to use any one element of your arsenal on its own, and must either suppress your quarry or use those grenades to send them in the direction of something else: a teammate's line of fire, a deployed turret or another grenade. Similarly, don't expect to coolly rack up kills with one of those turrets either: if you don't force an enemy into its path, they are used almost expressly for suppression.

Team revives aren't even straightforward. Whereas the AI in most shooters tends to ease off a little to give you a small window in which to revive a downed teammate, running to the aid of a buddy in *The Division* is akin to putting an enticing bounty on your own head. You have no choice but to suppress or distract your attackers, and this is where a potential problem arises: while the game works wonderfully well as a single-player endeavour, to play it alone is to miss out on a spectacular landmark in co-op. Some of the later levels bombard you with attacks from

every possible range and corner, and non-stop communication is crucial. It's also worth noting that to get the best out of it, it's always worth shooting for the moon. A team of Level 15s tackling a Level 15 mission is a riot, but the challenge offered by going above your group's mean rank by one or two levels is arguably where the game hits its dramatic sweet spot.

And speaking of drama, the trailblazing brilliance of *The Division*'s hybrid PvE/PvP area, the Dark Zone, is revelatory. Located at the centre of the game's world, the quarantined hotspot is a hatchery for desirable loot, all of which must be extracted in a process that not only occasionally summons aggressive NPCs, but notifies human players within the gates that you've probably got quality kit on you. Trips into the Dark Zone unfold in seemingly endless ways. Nail-biting tension can give way to heightened farce in a moment. Forced camaraderie can end in betrayal, an appreciative salute or a sturdy continuing partnership. NPCs can be used as a defensive wall when you've gone Rogue, but you're every bit as likely to be surprised by the AI as you are by other players. It's almost impossible to visit the Dark Zone and not come away with a great story. Forget about the loot, forget about the exploration: it's rousing because almost anything can happen in there.

For all of its brilliant action set-pieces, however, *The Division* is an RPG in its very core. You're going to be spending around ten per cent of your time (at least) beaver away in menus, even though the game's vast maze of



AXO Put 'Operation Dark Winter' into Google for some info on the tests that inspired *The Division*'s story.

abilities, talents, mods, upgrades, perks and skills is perplexing for the first few hours. Herein lies another hurdle: the periodic on-screen explanations are pretty arbitrary. Making sense of a game's systems and exploring how they tie into one another is as appealing to most RPG nuts as deep exploration of an environment, so the often curt and evasive language used in the menus is probably wholly intentional. Despite this standoffish approach, such a complicated project simply has to be commended for arriving in a state that feels fully formed. Loot dispersal feels right. The crafting feels right. And the process of blending the correct loadouts with the perfect selection of weapons and perks, in an attempt to construct the perfect eight-legged wrecking ball, feels right too.

Inevitably, there are shortcomings. Some enemies, particularly those who appear before you hit Level 10, are prone to tomfoolery. When you die and are waiting to be revived, there's no option to look at anything other than a dull black-and-white screen.

But the very worst thing about *The Division* at present, an aspect that is capable of entirely ruining the game for some people, is the callous way in which player levels are scaled. If a Level 25 jumps into a mission with a Level 5, the



“IT’S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO VISIT THE DARK ZONE AND NOT COME AWAY WITH A GREAT STORY”



PLAY MAG CHALLENGE



SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



HIGH ROLLER

▲ TRY EXTRACTING FROM the Dark Zone with only High-End pick-ups on you. It's tense but seriously satisfying.



GOING IN DRY

■ DRINKING WATER BUFFS your damage against Elite enemies. Try to take one down solo without touching a drop.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

enemies scale to somewhere in the middle, offering up no challenge to the former player and relentless death to the latter. This means that newcomers are forced to grind away alone for a while if they arrive late, unless their friends are willing to set up a secondary character to repeat the game's opening tier with. Ubisoft has made a game that, at present, doesn't accommodate play between friends with vastly different leisure timetables. But this problem will likely be remedied at some point, and the silver lining comes in the form of a peerless matchmaking system.

Slack storytelling and balancing complications aside, every issue we have with *The Division* a minor one. Everything that could possibly be demanded of a big-budget action-RPG like this – a stable online component, coercive skill and upgrade systems, action set-pieces of escalating bombast, gorgeous visuals – is here. It feels sharp. It feels playtested. It feels

like nearly half a decade of hard graft. And the damned thing just plain works.

A testament to the miraculous virtues of diligent talent hitched to a lengthy development cycle, *The Division* is at once unoriginal and a masterclass of design that feels fresh. There's nothing amusing about a smallpox pandemic, but in the blistering heat of combat, as enemies approach and force you to furiously strategise your way out of trouble, the only valid response comes in the form of incredulous, uproarious laughter.

Chet Roivas

VERDICT

Surprising, compelling and built to last, Ubisoft clearly has a new tentpole on its hands. You could wait for the sequel, but don't do that – *The Division* is great.

 PlayMag_UK scored 9 for Tom Clancy's The Division
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Hitman

Life on the murder scene



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Square Enix

DEVELOPER

IO Interactive

PSN PRICE

£11.99

£44.99 (Season Pass)

PLAYERS

1

INSTALL SIZE

9.3GB

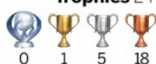
AGERATING

18+

TWITTER

@Hitman

Trophies 24



AS AGENT 47 strides down the catwalk, the crowd cooing at his makeup, flashlights

popping, girls screaming. "Oh my god! It's him," we can't help but think: 'Weren't we meant to be killing somebody?'

Agent 47 stops, pouts for the camera

and turns back lavishly on his heels. Suddenly, we remember the reason for our slightly bizarre disguise, lifted from the unconscious body of a superstar model.

We go straight from the catwalk to the upper floors of the Parisian palace, where we have a scheduled meeting with the very person we are trying to assassinate. Two minutes later, we're back on the catwalk – and our target is dumped in a wardrobe, a pair of stylist's scissors wedged between her shoulder blades.

Hitman takes the series back to its excellent roots: a huge, over-the-top sandbox chock full of NPCs, weapons,

ridiculous disguises, and endless ways to gruesomely murder people. Or at least, that's the impression we get from *Episode 1*. *Hitman* is getting released in stages, with one gigantic level released a month. For the first release, £12 will net you a couple of forgettable training missions, some bland cutscenes

"YOU CAN HAVE AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE GUIDANCE AS YOU WANT"

(however much the developers try and make us care about Agent 47, we just want to stab people in the neck), followed by the pièce de résistance: a sprawling fashion show in a Paris palace with two assassination targets.

The level is huge – a four-storey mansion, complete with lush gardens, guard houses, and valet parking. But more than that, it's dense: on the first floor alone, there are hundreds of NPCs across a lavish lobby, a bar, kitchen, the

aforementioned catwalk, a backstage makeup area, as well as wide hallways, toilets, and storerooms.

There are nearly endless ways to take your targets out, ranging from the mundane strangling by fibre wire to the extravagant – you can push one target off of a balcony *onto the other* as they

both watch a fireworks display, for example.

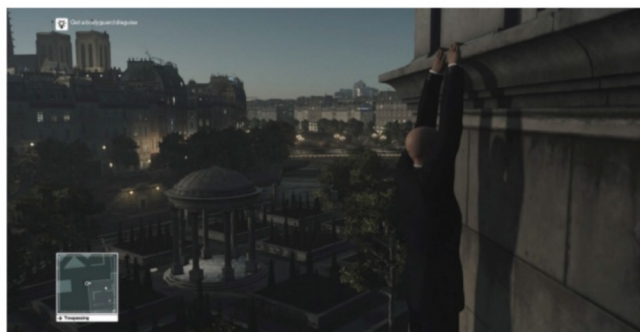
But making the perfect hit takes time and planning – a lot of it, given that the two targets

are on opposite sides of the map.

You can have as much or as little guidance as you want. 'Opportunities' – a new feature – are essentially scripted sequences that trigger once you arrive in certain areas of the map. There are several in the level, and they'll guide you through a perfect kill. Go to this location, eavesdrop on a conversation, grab this item, get this disguise, etc., all leading up to you alone with your mark. Playing this way takes all the fun out of *Hitman*. We'd say try one Opportunity – just to get a feel for what the game wants – and then go it alone by turning them off in the menu.

This is where the game really shines. We spent a good hour and a half just plotting what to do, skulking in shadows, knocking out backstage stylists, waiters, and security guards, listening to conversations, slipping in and out of different disguises to access different areas of the palace.

In the right outfit, most NPCs won't bat an eyelid when they see you. But without the right disguise, you'll soon be spotted,



IN THIS SERIES



HITMAN: ABSOLUTION Instead of large, open levels, *Absolution* gave players a linear, narrative-driven game that just wasn't interesting enough to keep you hooked.



ΔΟΧ The Paris palace is rich in detail, and full of NPCs. Drink it in.

ΔΟΧ The HUD gives you prompts for everything you can do in a given spot.



and asked to leave the area – stay and you risk getting shot.

The AI can be easy to exploit – simply throwing an object will draw guards dutifully away from their post. But you have to want to play that way to make it happen. It's generally solid, and makes the game difficult. If guards see a gun they'll stash it for themselves, and shout to alert others in the area that something is amiss. If you're spotted making a kill, security will give a description to their buddies over the radio, and you'll have to change your disguise sharpish.

There are more technical issues, too: loading screens stretch on for minutes, menus lag, and if your internet connection drops, you'll be kicked from your session. But they weren't enough to overshadow our time with the game.

As you play, you'll continually have "What If?" moments, ready to explore further in your next attempt. Eight hours in and we keep coming back to more imaginative ways to complete the level. If the other six episodes can improve on this first one, *Hitman* may challenge *Blood Money* for the best game in the series. And that's high praise indeed.

Samuel Horti

VERDICT

Hitman strips the series back to its satisfying, and winning, formula. A few technical issues aren't enough to ruin a strong start to Agent 47's new episodic campaign.

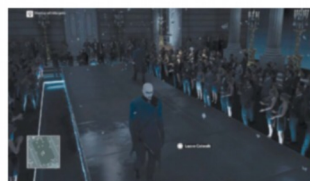
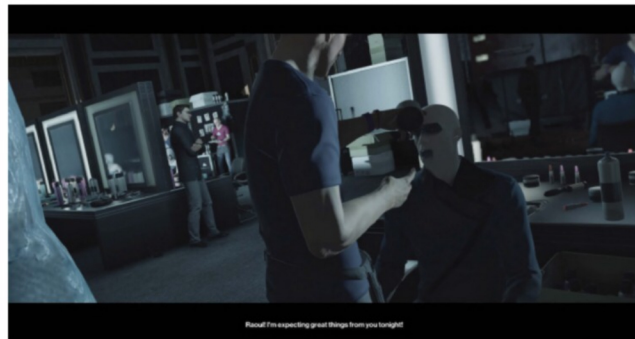


47 GOES TO ITALY

A sneak peek at Episode Two

From the 45 minutes we've had with *Episode 2*, we think it could be even better than Paris. The action is centred on a mansion in the middle of an Italian seaside town, but the surrounding alleyways and squares provide plenty of opportunities to set up perfect hits. On a road into town, a delivery van crashes into a cyclist on the way to delivering flowers to one of our targets. We take out the driver, nick a bouquet, and sneak into the mansion. We're directed by the head butler to lay the flowers on the grave of the mark's mother. Our target goes to pay his respects, sending his bodyguards away for a private moment. Unfortunately for him, we're not sentimental. As he bows his head, we jam a screwdriver into his neck. It's a cruel, cruel world.

ΔΟΧ You can shimmy up drainpipes if you want to quietly reach the palace's upper floors.



"THIS IS A VAST GAME AND A SPECTACULAR WORLD; GROUNDED IN REALITY BUT COMPLETELY ALIEN AT THE SAME TIME"

Far Cry Primal

A mammoth undertaking



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
12.1GB

AGE RATING
18+

TWITTER
@farcrygame

Trophies 51



WHAT HAPPENS TO

a shooter if you take away its guns? That's the question Ubisoft has

asked with *Far Cry Primal*: a prehistoric epic set in another vast open world filled with flora, fauna and fur-covered bad guys, but without a firearm in sight.

Unlike *Assassin's Creed*, where the once-proud series has shrunk in popularity due its endlessly recycled gameplay ideas, *Far Cry* is back to being an outlier – it's a shooter divorced of its safety net – and without an arsenal of guns to be able to point and fire at things, the developers have had to be creative and clever in order to create something this memorable.

In 10,000 BC, you play as Takkar, one of the few remaining members of the Wenja tribe, a group which has been persecuted by rival tribe, the cannibalistic Udam, to the point of near-extinction. After a sabre tooth tiger decimates your small hunting party, you stumble across another solitary member of the Wenja, and the two of you set about reuniting the few Wenja left in the land, creating a prosperous village, and crushing your enemies.

Amazingly, the entire game is subtitled, with characters sounding like gruff minions (the yellow ones) as they grunt noises at one another – which is an example of taking a genuine risk here, and Ubisoft is prepared to be different, although the pacing and systems underpinning *Primal* is more of the same. Yet this is a compelling story, a simple tale, where life is both precious to those who care for you but clearly fragile.

With so much danger across every inch of the beautiful but harsh land of Oros, death is just a part of life.

While *Far Cry Primal* does make significant changes to the physical gameplay of the series, there are structural parallels to *Far Cry 3* and *Far Cry 4*. Enemies still hole up in camps that can be overtaken, random missions pop up as you travel, story sections are presented in performance-captured

AOXO Finding new high-profile villagers opens up new crafting options





ΔΟΧ Oros is filled with amazing landmarks with cool names.



PLAY CHALLENGE



SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



SPEAR REVIEW

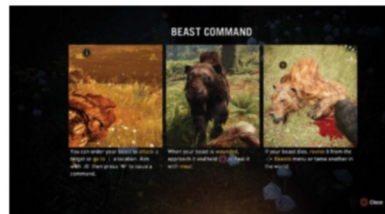
▲ SEE IF YOU can land a spear through an enemy's head from over twenty metres away. That'd make you a real spear-o.



CAVE STORY

▣ TRY EXPLORING EVERY cave in the game – they're confusing and claustrophobic but filled with rewards.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!



and hilariously enjoyable to throw. Got an enemy charging you with his club? Toss a spear straight through his stupid head and immediately reach for the Share button. As you'd expect, new killing options unlock as you progress, and by the end of the game, you will have many ways of removing Udam, Izila (the northern, ice tribe) and, of course, wildlife, from the world.

Talking of wildlife, you can tame beasts that you find, bringing them with you to decimate the enemy. Each animal has its own stats and perks and collecting them like prehistoric *Pokémon* is just another layer to a world that is just brimming with content.

This is a vast game and a spectacular world; one grounded in reality but completely alien at the same time. Stepping round a corner and seeing giant mammoths crushing the grass beneath their feet, hearing the roar of a sabre toothed tiger, creeping up on an enemy camp with a bow in hand – it's a game of great moments, and they happen every few minutes.

Far Cry Primal is a pleasant surprise early in 2016 and quite possibly the best *Far Cry* game of the lot. Guns are overrated, who needs them anyway?

Jon Denton

VERDICT

The most inventive *Far Cry* since the second game, *Primal* is a tremendously enthralling streamlining of the series, and a powerful trip back in time.



PlayMag_UK scored 8 for *Far Cry Primal*

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)



Plants Vs. Zombies Garden Warfare 2

Flower power



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

EA

DEVELOPER

PopCap Games

PSN PRICE

£54.99

PLAYERS

1-24

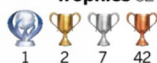
AGE RATING

7+

TWITTER

@PlantvsZombies

Trophies 52



AFTER SPENDING UMPTTEEN hours gunning down foreign-sounding men in dark and dingy

urban environments, it's difficult not to take an instant shine to *Plants Vs. Zombies Garden Warfare 2*. Kenny Loggins' *Danger Zone* blares out when you start the game up, the plant- and brain-based puns come thick and fast, and the charming, genuinely funny visual style of PopCap's series remains intact. In a genre saturated with identikit titles, it's a breath of fresh air, even the second time around.

Not only that, but PopCap's sequel is an improvement on its well-regarded predecessor in almost every measurable way. There's a lot of content in *Garden Warfare 2*, and while much of it –

including several new game modes and character variants – was added to the *Garden Warfare* as DLC, *GW2* does an great job of integrating it from the off.

The game operates around Backyard Battleground: a new hub world that houses portals to each of *Garden Warfare 2*'s principal modes from either

“BACKYARD BATTLEGROUND TIES GW2'S DISPARATE FEATURES TOGETHER IN A WAY THAT FEELS COHESIVE”

a Plants or Zombies base. And while we spent most of our time directly jumping into multiplayer, solo missions or the wave-based Garden and Graveyard Ops, the Battleground also offers its own distractions outside the bases – secret areas, mini-games and an King Of The Hill-style mode. It's a welcome addition

that ties *GW2*'s disparate features together in a way that feels cohesive.

The new modes are a success too, though they're mainly variations on standard shooter formats or inversions of previous *Garden Warfare* game modes. Herbal Assault is one such example – a mirror of previous favourite Gardens &

Graveyards – with its pair of multi-stage, *Battlefield*-style maps making it an instant standout. There's also a greater emphasis on solo play, and

increased support for split-screen multiplayer, though *GW2*'s 'campaign' is little more than a distraction.

By far *Garden Warfare 2*'s most significant additions, however, are its six new character classes. This is a class-based shooter, after all. On the plants side, the tank-cum-orange Citron



ΔOX□ It's generally bright and colourful, but *Garden Warfare 2*'s environments and weapon effects are gorgeous.



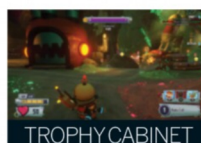
combines an energy shield and laser to make it a defensive stalwart, while Kernel Corn adds a much-needed heavy option to the arsenal. Rose, meanwhile, floats around casting spells that slow time, deal AOE damage and turn zombies into goats, which is particularly satisfying (and more useful than it sounds).

The new zombies are equally diverse. Super Brainz is a slow but devastating brawler and Captain Deadbeard can wreak havoc from afar with a slew of ranged, pirate-themed weaponry. The Imp is the standout, though. It's spiky, tiny, and has very little health, but stay alive long enough and it can summon an extremely powerful mech suit. The individual classes may take some balancing (we saw a lot of Roses during online play), but overall *Garden Warfare 2* has done an excellent job of making both plants and zombies distinct, evenly matched and, most importantly, fun to play.

Where the game does hit a snag is in the way it handles character progression. Not only are most of *GW2*'s dozens of class variants unlockable only via a semi-random sticker pack process, but they're each levelled up individually, too. The game goes some way towards redressing this issue with its character showcase, which grants unlimited access to two new variants per week, but unlocking your ideal character can just boil down to buying packs and crossing your fingers.

And while levelling individual characters isn't necessarily *slow*, unlocking and sampling the upgrades for each variant requires a fair bit of investment. This, combined with the fact that *Garden Warfare 2* doesn't offer much in the way of progression, ultimately means that there's little incentive to experiment with new characters – beyond the enjoyment of trying out Count Chompula for a round or two. There are a truly enormous

ΔOX□ Character design is vibrant as ever, with each Plant and Zombie packed full of personality.



TROPHY CABINET
PRANCE VS. SAMBA
Make sure to rub your superiority in an enemy's face by gesturing immediately after vanquishing them.



YOU'VE GOAT TO BE KIDDING ME
Reduce the opposition to a herd of bleating animals by goatifying 100 zombies with Rose's special ability.

amount of class specialisation options available here, which make for a diverse and nuanced game; it's just a shame that *GW2* doesn't reward you for trying them.

These are minor gripes in the context of everything *Garden Warfare 2* does well, however. PopCap has crammed its sequel full of more personality than pretty much any other shooter on the market, but it has also refined the foundations of the original game. It might have seemed an odd direction to take, but this PVZ spin-off series is blooming.

Ross Hamilton

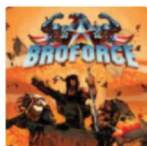
VERDICT

While not without foibles, *Garden Warfare 2* stands out in an overcrowded genre and delivers a polished, deep and substantial dose of shooter action.

8 PlayMag_UK scored 8 for Plants vs. Zombies Garden Warfare 2
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Broforce

Terrorists, your game is through



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Devolver Digital
DEVELOPER
Free Lives Games/
Abstraction Games
PSN PRICE
£11.99
PLAYERS
1-4
INSTALL SIZE
1.3 GB
AGE RATING
16+

TWITTER
@Broforce

Trophies 9



IMAGINE THE MOST stereotypical Eighties action movie possible – what do you see in your mind's eye? We'd wager it stars an ultra-American hero, his steroid-fuelled muscles looking like they're close to bursting, rippling with the exertion of shooting down a helicopter with an RPG while simultaneously mowing down waves of goons with an LMG. This forms the template for *Broforce*, a game that parodies that *Star-Spangled Banner*-singing brand of hero with a huge roster of caricatured action stars that specialise in making everything in their way explode.

You start each level as a random 'Bro'. The goal is to get to the end of the stage, kill the devil, raise the American flag

and then fly out on a helicopter while everything explodes. You've got one life and will die in one hit, so despite how destructive your character can be, you'll want to search out cages in the level and free the POWs inside, granting you another life and transforming you into another random Bro.

It's a great system in that it ensures that the most appealing aspect of the game is brought to the fore. *Broforce*

"WHY NOT TURN YOUR ENEMY INTO AN EXPLODING MEATBAG WITH THE BRODE'S EXPLODING HEART TECHNIQUE?"

knows that you want to play with as many of its Bros as possible and try out their different abilities, so it ensures that you're constantly switching between them, giving the game variety

as you find yourself slashing enemies with a sword as Broheart one second, unleashing a hail of chain gun fire as Brominator the next, and then smiling with delight as you unlock Bro Max, eager to see what he can do.

The rate with which *Broforce* has you switching through its eclectic cast of characters ties in nicely with the game's focus on speed, too. Levels are only a few minutes long at most, so there's no

need to go hoarding each character's special ability. Why not call in an air strike with Brodell Walker, toss off a Molotov with Snake Broskin, or turn

your enemy into an exploding meatbag with The Brode's Exploding Heart technique when you know you're going to be switching to another character any second? You're encouraged to create as much destruction as possible as you tear your way from left to right and it is when you're embracing that chaos is when *Broforce* is at its best.

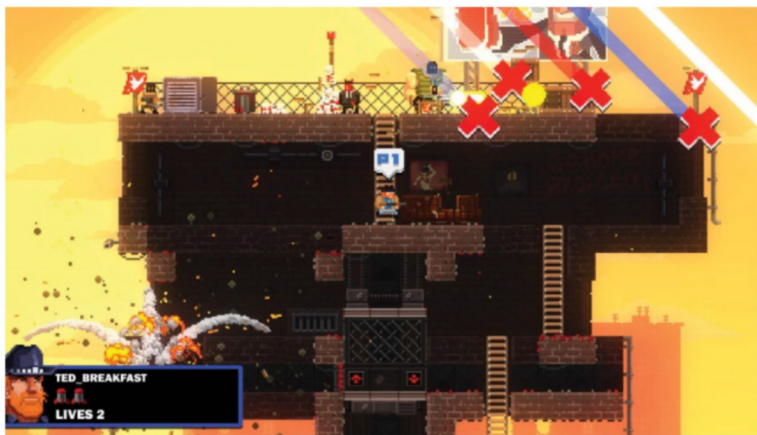
Speaking of destruction, pretty much every part of the game's stages can be shot, blown up and crushed. You'll often inadvertently create deadly chain reactions that see huge chunks of the level blown to pieces as blocks collapse around you, enemies explode in showers of blood and gas canisters fly in every direction. It all adds to the general sense of chaos and ostentation that makes *Broforce* enjoyable, but can also create problems. The most



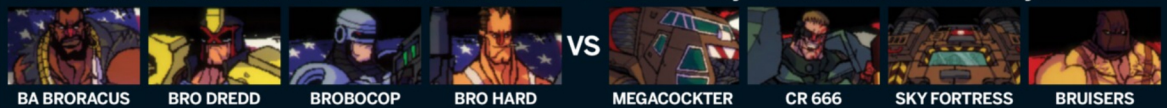
△○×□ Expect to fight a variety of bosses throughout the course of the game, each one having a specific weakness to exploit.



ΔOXΔ Broforce is made of explosions, pretty much.



TEAM AMERICA VS TEAM SATAN The allies at your side and the enemies you'll face



prominent of those is that you often can't tell what the hell is going on during the game's hectic instances of destructibility, to the point that you will die not knowing why. As the game gets more difficult, it becomes frustrating.

Destructible levels also mean that each stage does have a tendency to fade into the next by virtue of the fact that blowing chunks out them means there is little left to differentiate each level. The game does a decent job of counteracting that sense of repetition by frequently bringing in new elements, whether that be the ability to pilot mechs, new enemies, boss battles, set-pieces and so on. That variety also helps to obfuscate the fact that success sometimes feel like its more down to luck (getting a Bro with a useful special ability on a boss, for example) than skill, though there are moments when this becomes painfully obvious nonetheless.

By far the biggest issue with the PS4 version of *Broforce*, though, is that at

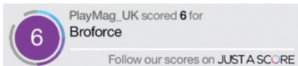
release, it is clearly an inferior port of the PC version. Frequent slowdown, a bug that stops the game responding for your inputs for a moment, the fact that you can be killed by enemies while your view is obscured by a full-screen image of a new character that *should* pause the game... these are issues we didn't encounter when playing on PC.

We wouldn't say that these technical problems ruin the game, but they do take the shine off it. If *Free Lives* can get them fixed, then *Broforce* is a game that we will be endorsing with less caveats.

Paul Walker-Emig

VERDICT

Despite some technical issues and minor frustrations, this parody of American patriotism and action hero stereotypes offers a hell of a lot of destructive fun.



ΔOXΔ Some weapons are so powerful that they'll send your Bro flying backwards in the air.



"SCENARIO MISSIONS HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM THE OLD 'KILL 1,000 ENEMIES' TEMPLATE INTO EVEN MORE BANAL TERRITORY"

Arslan: The Warriors Of Legend

The manga tie-in that pursued Lu Bu



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Koei Tecmo

DEVELOPER
Omega Force

PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
1-2

INSTALL SIZE
17 GB

AGE RATING
12+

TWITTER
@koeitecmoeurope

Trophies 41



ALSO ON PS3

ARE YOU THE kind of person that plays a *Dynasty Warriors* game to relax? Do you enjoy mashing the Square button until your pad starts creaking in complaint, ignoring everything but that calming, swirling chaos on your screen? For many, *Warriors* is a guilty pleasure, but we've accepted our love for the genre – if you can get past the mashing, you'll find some surprisingly entertaining mechanics under that mountain of corpses you've left in your wake.

Enter *Arslan* – the game that was supposed to change it all for Omega Force. Spoiler Alert: it hasn't. In fact, this is exactly the same as any *Dynasty Warriors* or *Samurai Warriors* game you've played in the last few years, dressed up with all the pomp of a JRPG story and given a lovely new art direction.

At least in the *Warriors* games, you can mostly just ignore the story: you've played the Battle Of Chi Bi a million times, you know Lu Bu is just going to turn up at some point. In *Arslan*, however, the story is integral to the game: it's an anime spin-off, after all. You've got to complete the campaign to unlock all the characters

and scenarios you want in Free Play, and the game automatically boots you into it once you start up.

Our main problem with this premise is that we just *don't care* about any of the characters. The game tries so, so hard to make get you invested in the story, but when you're just playing on maps seemingly recycled from *Dynasty Warriors* levels and switching between the game's myopic cast twice per level,

it's hard to get any traction with what's going on. We feel sorry for whoever had to translate some of *Arslan*'s lengthier cutscenes – we're just glad the spoken dialogue wasn't localised, too.

The one aspect of *Arslan*'s combat we found enjoyable was the weapon-switching combos – something Omega Force has tried before, but really perfected here. Basically, some strings of hits with a weapon can be cancelled into

AOXO There's a wide variety of characters in the game.





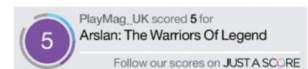
nothing more infuriating in these games than having a timer tick away whilst you're running a bloody escort mission, seeing your wards get stalled by one named Assault Captain that didn't render into the game properly. Back you go – back across the whole map – to save the sorry idiots that seemingly can't do even the simplest of tasks without you holding their hands throughout.

Some respite from the disappointing mission structure is given in the form of *Kessen*-like 'Mardan Rush' opportunities: you command a squadron of archers, cavalry or foot-soldiers, and you're invariably tasked with bringing down a tower, or a barricade or a gate. Racking up a 50,000+ chain is fun and actually quite rewarding, but these little Rushes are so unwieldy and scarce that, to be honest, they're little more than an opportunity for you to sigh before you head back to that beaten, weathered Square button for another four hours.

Dom Peppiatt

VERDICT

With less personality than a *Dynasty Warriors* game, totally forgettable story and sparse content, *Arslan* is only somewhat redeemed by its minor combat improvements.



another weapon's combo, all ending in special moves that vary from character to character. We began using and abusing this with the game's two powerhouse heroes – Arslan himself and his steward Daryun – because they get their extra weapons early and allow some variation to the Square-tapping.

But the game insists on flinging you around the world, playing as one character after another, setting up the RPG-lite Skill Card trees for each of them, only to never see them again. Each time, you basically start from scratch: your weapon skills naked, your allowance for upgrades paltry. The pacing is awful, and whilst we get this is a novel way of introducing an extensive (if unnecessary) cast, the way it works in Story mode is nothing short of frustrating.

Scenario missions have moved away from the old 'kill 1,000 enemies' template into even more banal territory. There's

50,000 SHADES OF GREY

USE A MARDAN Rush to get a chain of over 50,000 and you'll pop a Silver and be a hero Arslan himself would be proud of.

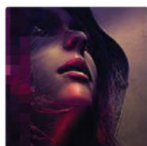
WARRIORS OF MIGHT

FINISH THE CAMPAIGN to unlock all characters. Then spend a trillion hours with each of them to max them out and get a Gold.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

République

Sneaking with the light on



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

NIS America

DEVELOPER

Camouflaj

PSN PRICE

£24.99

PLAYERS

1

AGE RATING

16+

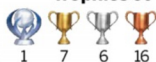
INSTALL SIZE

5GB

TWITTER

@Camoflaj

Trophies 30



THINK BACK TO Aiden Pearce's rampant hacking in *Watch Dogs* and you're some way towards

understanding what *République* is and what makes it enjoyable. You play as a nameless outsider who, in a similar fashion to the hacking sections in Ubisoft's game, is able to hijack electronic devices within view, leaping between cameras to explore the environment, spot guards, steal intel and mess with various security systems.

Your goal is to use these skills to help a young girl called Hope escape from a place called Metamorphosis. Making that a rather difficult prospect is the fact that Metamorphosis is a brutal dictatorship controlled by a man who likes burning books (apart from his

own manifesto, of course), putting up statues of himself, and killing people who displease him.

Unlike the original version of this game, which came out on iOS, you take direct control of Hope too, making this a game where you alternate between scoping out an area with cameras and taking control of Hope to guide her

“AT TIMES DURING OUR CRISSCROSSING OF THE FACILITY, IT BROUGHT METAL GEAR SOLID TO MIND”

through areas without being spotted by patrolling guards. While you do have the option to use tasers to take down guards and pepper spray to stun them, you will likely find that avoiding conflict is the best option, whether simply by sneaking around in cover, locking a

guard behind a door, or using abilities that allow you to distract guards.

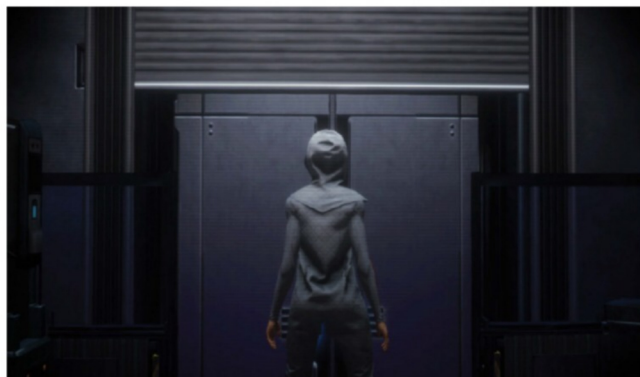
There's something satisfying about having the power to leap between cameras, bust into emails and interfere with security systems. Having to depend on switching between these semi-fixed camera positions gives the game a different feel to its stealth

contemporaries too, making information gathering an intrinsic part of the experience – whether that be scoping out a route or scanning objects to pick up snippets of information

about *République*'s story.

The act of information gathering remains satisfying throughout and is helped by one-shot gameplay ideas that give you new things to do with your abilities. We think in particular of a section that requires you to dig deep into the lives of a couple of guards in order to put together news stories and smear them. Representative of *République* at its best moments, this section simultaneously works as rewarding piece of detective work and a powerful way of delivering its narrative, giving you a heart-wrenching insight into the backstories of people that were faceless enemies up until that point.

République does a good job of delivering its story through gameplay, offering up enough intriguing threads, conspiracies and questions to have us hooked by the end of episode three of its five-part structure.





△×□ It's times like these when you wish all your tasers hadn't been confiscated...



EASTER EGG HEAVEN

There are loads of videogame references to be found hidden throughout *Metamorphosis*



GONE HOME



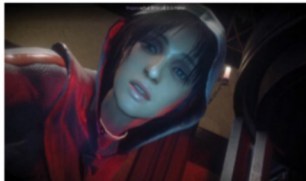
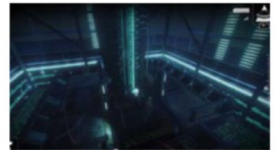
NUCLEAR THRONE



SHADOWRUN RETURNS



SHOVEL KNIGHT



It's unfortunate, then, that the game completely kills its momentum with an awful fourth episode. Taking away much of what makes the game fun, *République* becomes tedious and frustrating. Its concluding fifth episode is better, but it never really recovers.

If we had another criticism, it'd be that for a game that's concerned with the dangers of the modern surveillance state, it can at times seem old-fashioned in its outlook. Like so many other games, it is unable to think outside the boundaries defined by Orwell's *1984* when it comes to what control looks like and how ideology functions. Like the canonised works of banned literature you can find hidden in the game's world, *République* rarely feels as provocative as you would hope.

Even in light of that, though, we can't say that we didn't enjoy finding out

about the world of *Metamorphosis* and uncovering its mysteries. Up until the fourth episode, this title proves itself to be a creative game that's skilled in its storytelling and that, at times during our crisscrossing of the facility, brought *Metal Gear Solid* to mind.

There are rough edges, there are mistakes and there are disappointments, but there's enough that's good here to make it worthwhile.

Paul Walker-Emig

VERDICT

A stealth title with good ideas that help it stand out from other titles, *République* also tells a compelling story until it all falls apart in its terrible fourth episode.

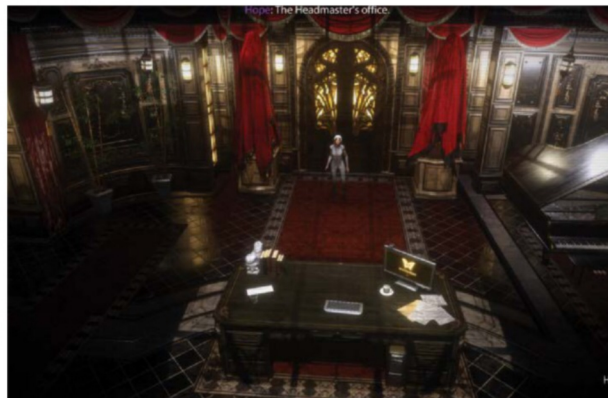


PlayMag_UK scored 7 for *République*

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



△×□ Pressing R1 to enter the hack view highlights any objects you can interact with by pressing the corresponding face button.



REVIEW ROUND-UP

THE IDEA BEHIND HITMAN GO: DEFINITIVE EDITION [A] is that it takes the *Hitman* series and distills it down to its most basic form, presenting a tabletop game interpretation where Agent 47 is a piece for you to move around a board. You take a turn to move one space, and then the enemy takes its turn. You have to navigate the board without being spotted to get to an exit point and complete optional objectives along the way (collect a briefcase, finish within a certain number of turns, and so on). It's a very simple system that's easy to get your head around, but one that quickly ramps up in complexity, its intricate design becoming ever more taxing as enemies that behave in different ways are introduced, as well as familiar *Hitman* mechanics such as disguises and distractions. It works surprisingly well as a *Hitman* game despite its abstract nature, but is also enjoyable as a brain-teasing puzzle

title, regardless of whether you have any interest in *Hitman*. We've tested that PS4 version, but we would be inclined to suggest that the game's quickfire nature makes it ideal for Vita.

Our next title is an odd one to evaluate in that so much of what makes it good or bad depends on its community. **GUNSCAPE [B]** is a cross between old-school FPS and *Minecraft*, offering up a suite of tools that allow you to create and share your own levels.

“THE ONCE-DERIDED PRACTICE OF LOOKING AT YOUR OPPONENTS’ SCREENS IN SPLIT-SCREEN FPS MULTIPLAYER IS NOW VITAL”

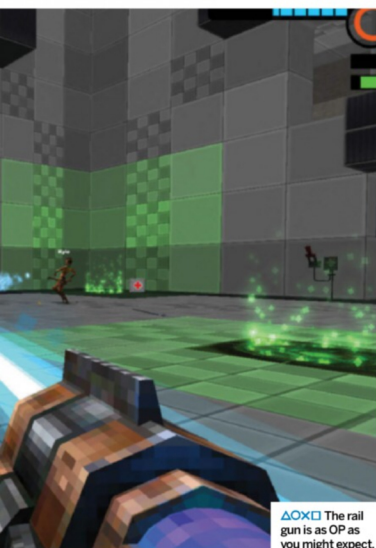
The campaign that the game offers to introduce you to what is on offer is rubbish, but fortunately, there's some much better stuff that's been created by the community. As well as some

cool original content, there are loads of recreations of classic multiplayer levels from the likes of *GoldenEye* and *Quake III Arena*. The nostalgia value of revisiting these iconic maps while getting some local multiplayer on the go (you can also play online) is one of our favourite aspects of the game, though it clearly pales in comparison to the titles these maps emulate in its quality as a shooter. There are also problems with the discovery system, which doesn't allow you to extensively browse maps (you can only refresh collections that come under particular headings and see what comes up) and, bizarrely, it offers no way to search for maps that you have previously enjoyed and want to play again.

We like the idea behind **FOUL PLAY [C]**, which is that it is a performance, rather than a straight-up 2D fighter. You take on the role of demonologist Baron Dashforth (accompanied by Scampwick in co-op), recounting tales of his past exploits as you move from left to right on a stage. Your goal



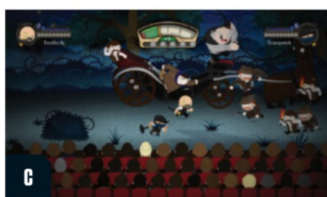
▲○○ Blue guards stay where they are, yellow ones follow a set path.



△×□ The rail gun is as OP as you might expect.

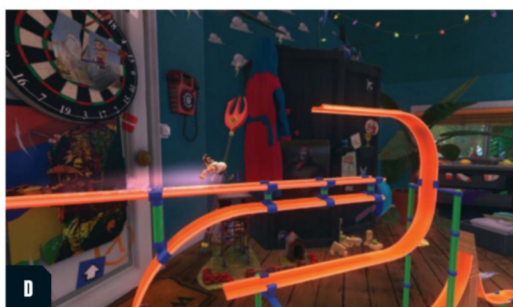
is to keep the audience watching happy, rather than to watch your health bar, which is replaced with an appreciation meter you're aiming to maintain at a high level by keeping your combos going. The problem is that the game isn't precise enough to support a system based on keeping a combo flowing in a truly engaging way. Repetitive button mashing with a few parries thrown in is as much as is required from you. Consequently, while we like the concept, and the humour, we can't say that this is much more than an average side-scrolling fighter.

Speaking of average, **ACTION HENK [D]** is a time trial title reminiscent of *Joe Danger* or the *Trials* games. The basics of the game are that you've got to race from left to right as quickly as possible. You can refine your time racing against bronze, silver and gold ghosts and, at the end of each set of levels, race against a new character that you unlock by defeating them. Quick restarts allow you to get your timing down on when to run, jump, slide and swing on your grapple hook. Is not that we didn't have any fun with *Action Henk*, it's just that it does nothing to make it stand out against other titles in the genre. As such, it's just incredibly forgettable. If you're a hardcore fan of arcade time trial games, then we certainly suggest

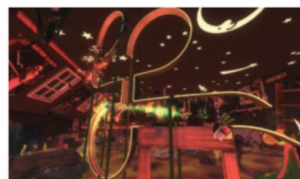


giving it a go, but outside of that, it's hard to recommend in a world where *Trials* exists – RedLynx has this genre on lock.

You certainly couldn't accuse **SCREENCHEAT [E]** of being a game that does nothing to stand out. True, there is no shortage of multiplayer first-person shooters out there, but there aren't any where all the characters are invisible, as is the case in *Screencheat*. The idea here is that the once-derided practice of looking at your opponents' screens in split-screen multiplayer is now vital to the experience. Looking at the other players' views allows you to estimate where they are and fire off a shot in the hope that you will take them down (although if you miss, a telltale



△×□ Pressing down while going down a slide will allow you to pick up speed.



wisp of smoke from your discharged weapon could give away your position). The system certainly takes time to get your head around, especially when you're in a four-player match, trying to monitor every screen at once while everyone is running around at speed, but it is incredibly rewarding when you manage to cut down one of your invisible foes. It does support online play, but for us, it shines in the environment that gave birth to its concept – that is to say, playing alongside friends in local multiplayer.

△×□ The weapons in *Screencheat* aren't exactly your standard fare...



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INTERVIEW

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

Hello Games' Sean Murray on the trials and tribulations of making *No Man's Sky*, a practically endless videogame

Let's start at the beginning: how did *No Man's Sky* first begin to take shape?

We had a reasonably clear idea of what we wanted *No Man's Sky* to be. You can ask around about this, but the thing they always say about working with me is that I will have an idea and everyone will have ideas, but I will just keep repeating mine and slowly wear everyone down to the point where they'll just say, 'Let's just do what he's saying, just to shut him up.' Or probably it goes in enough and they're more like, 'That is a good idea.'

For me, I was actually starting to not enjoy things and at almost my lowest point [at work] and I had to do a conference call with Microsoft. Everyone else had gone home and I had to stay up until five in the morning, so I just started writing code. I just started a new project. I didn't want to write any new *Joe Danger* code, so I just started writing new code. The guys came in, in the morning, and I had stayed all night and I was like, 'We're doing it! We're going to

do Skyscraper!' And I had this awful demo. It looked a bit like *Minecraft*, but on a planet and I said, 'Aren't you all excited?' And no one was because it looked terrible and impossible. But I then just developed that over a year. So it was designed – it wasn't just 'let's get in, there are no terrible ideas.'

How much of that demo is still in the game?

After about five months, you could look at it and look at it now and go, 'That looks a bit like *No Man's Sky*.' Which is a really nice feeling in some ways because there's some consistency there. You could fly between one planet and another and, in fact, the first planet you flew to was snowing and a lot like the one we just showed you in some ways, so there's a moment of that being really nice. There was some consistency of vision. But there's also a moment of, 'What on earth have we been doing for the last two years? It was there!' But you would see that it was really crappy-looking and there were loads

of problems and you'll find you're flying a cube, basically, rather than a spaceship. From the early days, a bunch of the concepts are still there, like the sentinels were there, scanning creatures, scanning trees, flora and fauna, the terrain was kind of there. I dug it out recently and I had forgotten all of that stuff had been there. And even some of the aesthetic was there as well; you could kind of get a sense of that. I mean, nothing worked and it was all terrible and full of nonsense, but you don't realise it at the time that you're forming the idea as you go in such a consistent way.

So it was just refinement from that point on?

It doesn't feel like that. I don't know if I can describe this well, but if you had asked me at the time, I couldn't have told you which bits were going to make it to the end and which bits weren't. I didn't know what shape it was in at the time, but I can look back now. It's like if people show you their babies – and I'm terrible with

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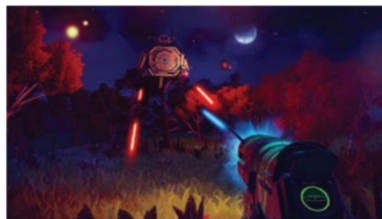
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this – all babies look the same. You're like, 'It's a baby.' And other people say it looks like its dad or something like that, but I can't see that. But when they're older you can look back at pictures of an adult from when they were a child and see it was blatantly the same person. It's so obvious, but when you look at a child, you can't tell what they're going to look like when they get older, or at least I can't.

It was the same thing with the game. You're looking at it and you're thinking, 'I don't know what this is going to turn out to be.' But now I can look back and think, 'How could we have not known? It was exactly that the whole time!'

Was it important to have a touchstone like *Minecraft* to prove that you were moving in the right direction?

It's exactly that. We weren't sitting around thinking, 'We want to make a game like *Minecraft*.' It's been really affirming. There are so many things that most of us have felt

for ages, I think, in talking about games. We've all felt like, 'I wish games were more like this or had more of these elements.' And it's great to have *Minecraft*, because you can use it for everything. There are all these rules that people thought existed such as 'people will only buy *Call Of Duty*', and it's just really nice to say that the best-selling game in the world is *this*.

I remember when it first came out, it was fascinating to watch my nieces and nephews play it. They were playing it in a way that I didn't even understand. I was actually sad that I had lost the ability to see that you can just play a game and just play without collecting a coin or getting an achievement every ten seconds. I'm so used to that. I'm so programmed to that.

"WE WEREN'T SITTING AROUND THINKING, 'WE WANT TO MAKE A GAME LIKE MINECRAFT'"

It proves that you don't need photorealistic graphics; it proves that you don't need massive cutscenes; it proves that you can be really creative and innovative and different. You can see people in the industry using it all the time as an example, 'this disproves loads of the things that you were saying and thinking about gamers and how people play games'.

You can watch a kid play *Minecraft* and say, 'What are you doing right now?' And they will say, 'I don't know.' They're just messing and they're just playing like you would with Lego or something like that...

Want to read more? Check out **games™ 172**, available now, for even more *No Man's Sky* goodness!

EXTENDED PLAY

FAR CRY

Ploughed your way through *Primal* and still want more? Don't worry, there are plenty of ways for you to scratch that *Far Cry* itch...



FAR CRY 2

■ **THE LIKES OF** *Far Cry 3* and *Far Cry 4* would be the obvious places to send you, given that those games stick closely to the *Far Cry* formula we are now familiar with. But if you're tempted to instead try something with a twist, then *Far Cry 2* is the game for you. Degradable weapons, the need to deal with malaria and other such mechanics give the game an unforgiving nature which ties into its tone and themes in a brilliant way. Some people think it's just really, really annoying, mind. Even if you fall into the 'hate it' camp, at least it's an interesting look at the evolution of the series and the direction it could have gone in.



CO-OP

■ **THE FAR CRY** series is primarily known as a single-player series and it's the way most people tend to experience it. If you want to enjoy more of those moments where you're messing about in the world, though, playing with the wildlife, trolling the guards, and capturing outposts, you should try playing it with a friend to create the kind of chaos that's only possible with a partner. *Far Cry 3* does have a co-op mode, but it's a separate campaign with its own story. We prefer the open world co-op of *Far Cry 4* that lets you just drop in with a friend and do whatever you want.



MAD MAX

■ **WHAT IS IT** that you like most about the *Far Cry* games? Is it gradually unlocking new areas on the map and then working your way through each enemy outpost you find to take over the game world? If that's the case, then you might want to give *Mad Max* a shot. Its third-person *Batman: Arkham*-inspired combat means it is different enough to offer you something fresh, but its focus on capturing outposts and unlocking info on your map screen means it has a very similar structure that's likely appeal to you if you enjoy the *Far Cry* games.



BLOOD DRAGON

■ **AFTER THE RELEASE** of *Far Cry 3*, Ubisoft wanted to give us more, but also to take it in a crazy direction – hence the release of standalone expansion, *Blood Dragon*. It's more

or less *Far Cry* as we know it, just a lot more chaotic. Stylistically, it takes the game in a comedic direction, parodying an Eighties vision of the future with a macho American hero.



THE MOVIE

■ **YOU KNOW HOW** movies based on games are pretty much always awful? The straight-to-DVD *Far Cry* movie, from none other than cinematic clown Uwe Boll, is no exception. Still, that means it's a prime candidate as one of those awful movies you

gather around to watch, just so you can laugh at how bad it is. Ubisoft is planning another *Far Cry* film, so if everything goes well with the *Assassin's Creed* movie, perhaps we'll get a decent film adaptation in a few years time.

YOU HAVEN'T
PLAYED...?

DISGAEA

As JRPGs push ever further into action territory, it's nice to play a game that isn't afraid to wear its stats on its sleeve. If you like strategic RPG battles, you should be all over this series, dood...



■ **ALTHOUGH IT HAS** been around since the PS2 days, *Disgaea* is a franchise that continues to surprise us – partly in its ability to innovate and evolve within the confines of grid-based battles, but also in how there are still fans of big numbers, cartoon penguin demons and classic SRPG combat that haven't played any of these awesome games. Since they don't tend to be directly related, you can pretty much jump into any *Disgaea* game and have a blast, but do them in order if you plan on playing more than one – going back to earlier games where certain features hadn't been implemented yet can be frustrating. On PS4, there's only one option anyway, and that's last year's *Disgaea 5: Alliance Of Vengeance*.

The core concept is always the same – recruit an army of demonic underlings and throw them around grids packed with enemies until their stats explode. With a level cap of 9,999 and values that grow into the billions, you can expect to lose months building the perfect team. As cool and challenging as the endgame content is, though, *Disgaea* is equally superb in the early stages. As it teaches you mechanics and eases you in, a playful sense of humour (NIS America has one of the best localisation teams around – it's genuinely funny) and crazy cast of characters makes even simple battles enjoyable. Up there with the likes of *Fire Emblem* and *Shining Force*, *Disgaea* is a strategy-RPG legend. Get involved, dood!

WAIT... WHAT?

Disgaea plays host to some pretty complex modes and mechanics. Here's a quick breakdown of some of its strangest features...



DARK ASSEMBLY

Pass bills to change game rules, unlock new content or pretty much anything else. If the vote fails, you can always resort to violence.



ITEM WORLD

Within every item in the game is a dungeon, clearing which enhances your gear. Stages are randomly generated, so anything goes.



GEO PANELS

Coloured tiles are affected by any status blocks upon them, setting up hazards, mazes and puzzles to overcome during battle.

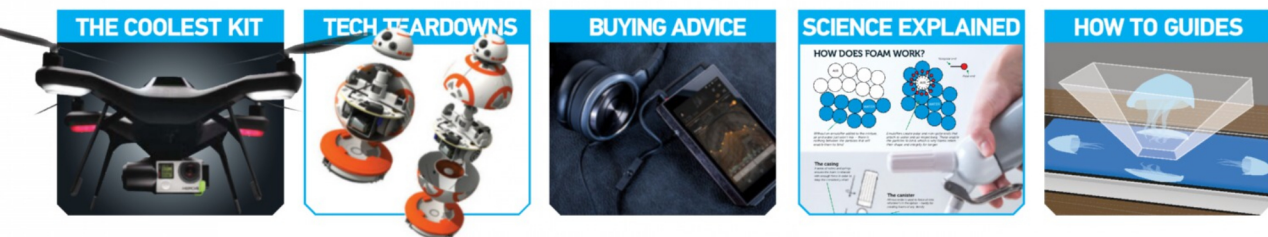
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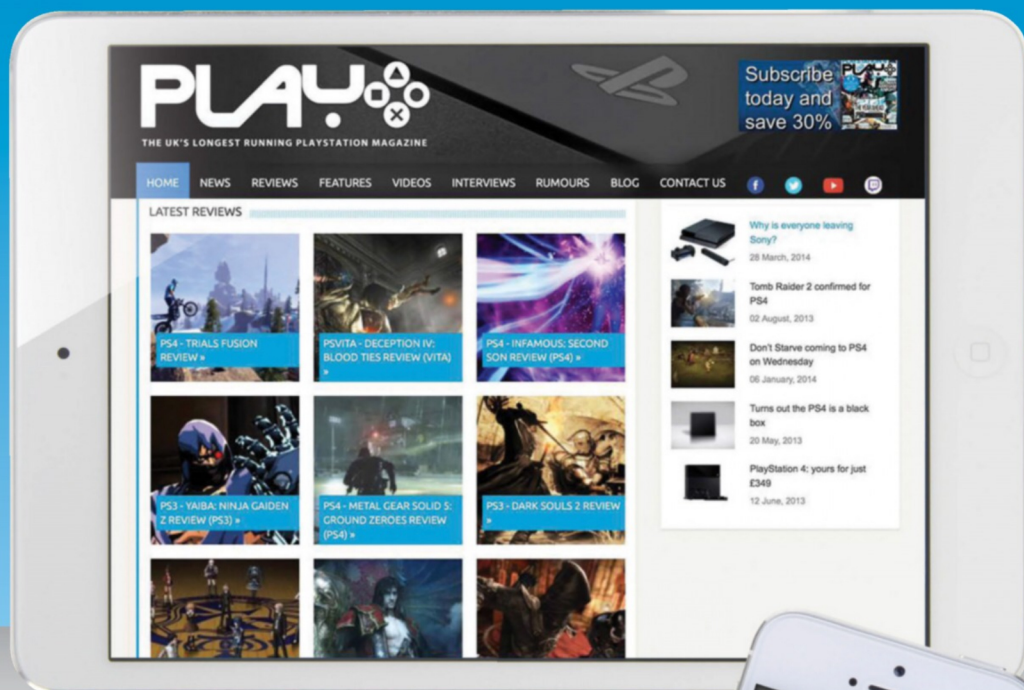
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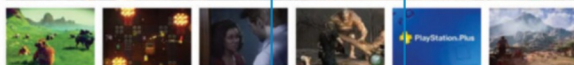
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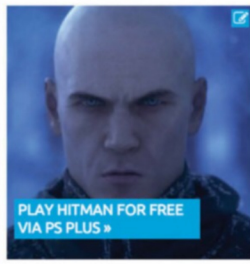
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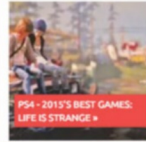
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PS PLUS TROPHY GUIDE

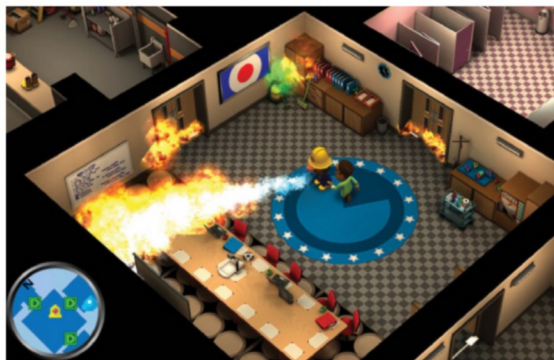


BROFORCE

PLATFORM: PS4 DIFFICULTY: 3/5

TROPHIES: 9 0 2 2 5

■ **THERE'S NO PLATINUM** here, unfortunately, and a very scant offering of other awards to sink your teeth into. Still, at least they're all pretty easy to get once you get the hang of how the game works. You'll want to prioritise some of the miscellaneous tasks first – lob a grenade back at the enemy who tossed it at you, use a melee attack to return a bullet to its sender, kill a terrorist with a martini – and then you can push on with clearing the campaign a couple of times: difficulty does stack, but you might find it easier working your way up the ladder because those top tier modes are hard. The most fun Bronze you can get here? Punch the devil so hard he explodes.



FLAME OVER

PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 4/5

TROPHIES: 36 1 5 10 20

■ **THERE ARE A** lot of miscellaneous Trophies in this game that you don't really have to go out of your way to unlock – just give the Trophy list a cursory look before you start and know what you need to be working towards. In the early game, for example, try clearing an entire level with just a hose, then with just an extinguisher. After getting used to the game, try the campaign again to complete it in under an hour (not too hard if you ignore the peripheral stuff and go in for the main objectives). Don't be afraid of dying – you'll hit the 100 deaths reward sooner rather than later that way. After a speed run, go for a perfect run, saving all cats, all people and doing every mission. A Gold awaits you for a flawless playthrough.

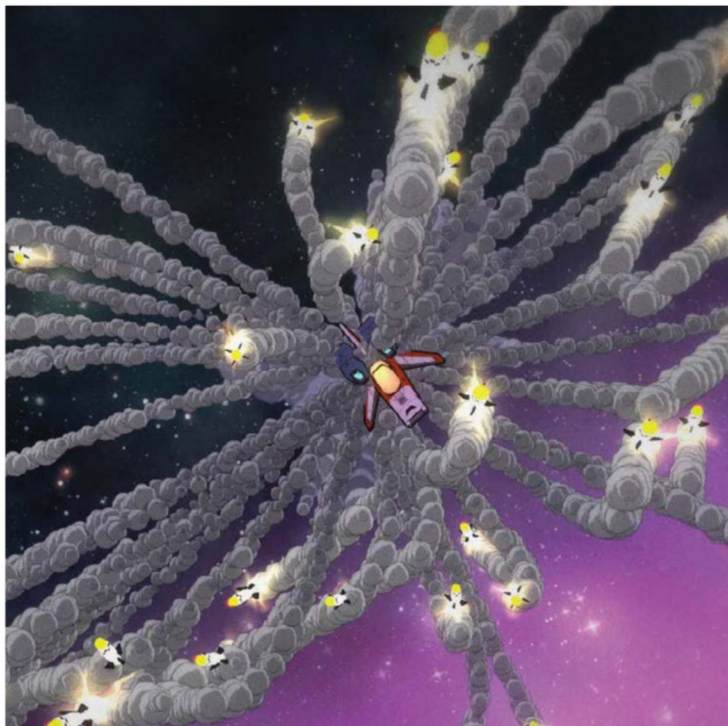
SUPER STARDUST HD

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 2/5

TROPHIES: 12 0 1 4 7

■ **JUMP STRAIGHT INTO** Arcade mode – play through each of the stages on the five planets and you will harvest a good chunk of all the available Trophies. Keep an eye on some of the more interesting Trophies available while you're doing this: feast on all the multipliers you can, hold onto your bombs, and try to collect 15 or more tokens in one boost. Going for 'Shield Blaster' is pretty hard – you can't get hit for a level (yeah, good luck with that), so play it safe. There are some incredibly frustrating and time-consuming Trophies to get in this game – you might just put 100 hours in and not make any progress at all. Well, it is a Housemarque game, after all...





GALAK-Z

PLATFORM: PS4 DIFFICULTY: 3/5

TROPHIES: 11 🏆 0 🏆 1 🏆 3 🏆 7

■ **THE MAJORITY OF** this game's rewards are given out through the Story mode in this one, so make clearing that your priority – you can jump straight in, as a tutorial mission will explain things in a simple way for you. Here's a hint we can give you to help minimise the time you'll spend in the campaign: be mindful of your shields. If they go

“MANIPULATE THE ENEMY VISION IN ANYWAY YOU SEE FIT AND YOU’LL HAVE A MUCH EASIER TIME”

down, get out of a fight and recharge them – it's free and they're your first line of defense; play it safe. Also, don't be afraid of stealth – manipulate the enemy vision in any way you see fit and you'll have a much easier time. Once you're done with the story, just try to clear a level without being hit and you'll have every Trophy on offer.

THE LAST GUY

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 5/5

TROPHIES: 15 🏆 0 🏆 1 🏆 1 🏆 13

■ **ANOTHER GAME THIS** month with stingy handouts when it comes to rewards, this is a stage-based top-down alien invasion game that can be a real tough nut to crack. Play through all of the stages (don't worry about star ratings yet) to nab yourself five Trophies – there are an extra three on offer if you sniff out all the VIPs en route, too. Keep an eye out for long lines of fleeing survivors that you can rescue in one fell swoop: you'll want to get 3000+ in one go for Demo March. Keep playing until you've rescued 100,000 people and completed 100 cumulative stages, and you *should* have done everything you need to get every Trophy by that point. Just don't forget to go back and get three stars on all the levels you haven't yet aced.



REALITY FIGHTERS

PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 1/5

TROPHIES: 30 🏆 1 🏆 6 🏆 5 🏆 18

■ **YOU'LL NEED TO** play through the game a minimum of two times, complete time attack at least *ten* times and clear survival mode, to boot. Luckily, this game isn't hard – especially if you play as a boxer. Fight through the 16 stages of Story mode and get some rewards, whilst also popping a Gold. Head back into Story on 'Full Steam' mode, and arm yourself with an electric guitar, wand and rocket once unlocked: this makes everything easier. Start working your way towards a gold score in every time attack stage, purchase all fighting styles, complete survival mode and prepare to grind online...

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NOMAN'S SKY



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STREET FIGHTER V



IF YOU WANT to see what the new characters can do, keep an eye on our YouTube channels – we'll be putting them through their paces.

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YOUR BEST SCREENS



△○×□ There's nothing quite so rewarding as nailing the perfect headshot... well, except for maybe getting a free game for your trouble. Congrats, Batch!



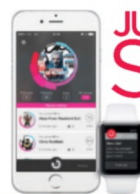
△○×□ Check out the warzone gymnastics captured by Mad_Man_Joe999! The great Star Wars Battlefront shots just keep on coming... more, please!



△○×□ Mainiacs apparently landed a one-in-a-million snipe, this headshot also dropping a seagull for the Trophy! Now try to do that again.

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LET'S PLAY...

DLC



LUKE ALBIGES ROCK BAND 4

I'm glad to see that Harmonix is gradually adding all the modes and features I missed when *RB4* launched and even though I haven't grabbed any of the new songs yet, it's only a matter of time...



LIAM WARR ROCKET LEAGUE

You might think there would be a point where I'd run out of superlatives for my Delorean. Or even that I might just stop talking about it. The fact is, this is *literally* the best half-pint I have ever spent.



DREW SLEEP BLOODBORNE: THE OLD HUNTERS

From continually sets the standard for DLC and *TOH* is probably its best. I can't fault it, there's literally nothing wrong with it – it's perfect. These eyes have seen things, horrors, and I wouldn't have it any other way.



PAUL WALKER-EMIG DISHONORED

While *Dishonored's* DLC wasn't quite up to the quality of the main game, it gave me enough of that experimental stealth that I love *Dishonored* for, so I was happy.

PS4



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Alien: Isolation	249	9
Amplitude	266	8
Assassin's Creed Chronicles: China	257	7
Assassin's Creed Chronicles: India	266	7
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	8
Assassin's Creed Syndicate	264	4
Assassin's Creed: Unity	251	6
Axiom Verge	256	9
Batman: Arkham Knight	258	9
Battlefield 4	238	8
Battlefield Hardline	256	7
Blazblue Chronophantasma Extend	264	9
Bloodborne	256	9
Bloodborne: The Old Hunters	265	9
Bound By Flame	245	6
Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare	251	8
Call Of Duty: Black Ops III	264	8
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	7
Child Of Light	244	7
CounterSpy	248	5
DariusBurst: Chronicle Saviours	266	8
Daylight	245	2
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	7
Dead Or Alive 5: Last Round	254	7
Destiny	249	9
Destiny: House Of Wolves	258	8
Destiny: The Dark Below	252	7
Destiny: The Taken King	262	9
Devil May Cry 4: Special Edition	258	8
Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls	248	9
Disney Infinity 2.0	249	8
Divinity: Original Sin Enhanced Edition	264	8
Don't Starve	240	8
Dragon Age: Inquisition	251	8
Dragon Ball Xenoverse	255	5
Dragon Quest Heroes	263	8
Driveclub	250	8
Dying Light	254	9
Dynasty Warriors 8 XLCE	243	8
EA Sports UFC	246	7
Ether One	258	8
Everybody's Gone To The Rapture	261	8
Evolve	254	6
FT1505	260	8
Fallout 4	264	9
Far Cry 4	251	8
Fez	243	10
FIFA 15	249	8
FIFA 16	262	9
Final Fantasy Type-0	255	8
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	243	9
Firewatch	267	6
Game Of Thrones: Iron From Ice	253	8
Geometry Wars 3: Dimensions	252	9
God Of War III Remastered	260	8
Grand Theft Auto V	251	10
Grim Fandango Remastered	254	8
Guilty Gear Xrd -SIGN-*	253	9
Guitar Hero Live	264	8
Hardware: Rivals	266	5
Hohokum	248	8
Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number	255	9
inFamous: First Light	249	5
inFamous: Second Son	242	8
Just Cause 3	265	7
JStars Victory VS+	260	6
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	8
Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	246	8
King's Quest: A Knight To Remember	261	8
Knack	238	6
Lara Croft And The Temple Of Osiris	252	5
Lego Batman 3: Beyond Gotham	252	6
Lego Dimensions	263	7

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Lego Marvel's Avengers	267	6
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	8
Lego Jurassic World	258	7
Lego The Hobbit	244	6
LittleBigPlanet 3	251	9
Lords Of The Fallen	251	7
Madden 16	262	8
Mad Max	262	4
Mercenary Kings	244	8
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	242	8
Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain	261	9
Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor	250	8
Mortal Kombat X	257	9
Murdered: Soul Suspect	246	4
N++	261	8
Naruto Shippuden Ultimate Ninja Storm 4	267	8
NBA 2K15	250	8
Need For Speed	264	5
Need For Speed Rivals	238	8
NHL 15	249	6
Not A Hero	267	6
Nuclear Throne	266	8
Octodad: Dadliest Catch	244	6
Outlast	241	7
PES 2015	250	9
PES 2016	262	9
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare	248	7
Project Cars	258	6
Rainbow Six Siege	265	8
Resident Evil HD	253	8
Resident Evil Revelations 2	256	7
Resogun	238	9
Resogun Heroes	247	9
Rock Band 4	263	7
Rocket League	260	8
Rogue Legacy	248	9
Rory McIlroy PGA Tour	260	5
Sébastien Loeb Rally Evo	267	5
Shovel Knight	258	9
Skylanders Superchargers	263	7
Skylanders Swap Force	238	7
Skylanders Trap Team	250	7
SOMA	262	8
Star Wars Battlefront	265	6
Street Fighter V	267	9
Strider	242	6
Super Time Force Ultra	262	9
Switch Galaxy Ultra	253	8
Tales From The Borderlands: Zer0 Sum	252	7
Tearaway Unfolded	262	7
Teslagrad	253	7
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	245	2
The Binding Of Isaac: Rebirth	251	9
The Crew	252	5
The Evil Within	250	8
The Last Of Us Remastered	247	10
The Order: 1886	254	8
The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter	260	8
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	257	10
The Witness	267	10
Thief	241	7
This War Of Mine: The Little Ones	267	7
Tiny Brains	240	6
Titan Souls	257	7
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5	263	3
Transistor	245	9
Transformers: Devastation	263	8
Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark	247	3
Trials Fusion	244	8
Ultra Street Fighter IV	258	8
Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection	263	8
Unravel	267	7
Until Dawn	261	8
Valiant Hearts	247	6
War Thunder	239	8
Wasteland 2: Director's Cut	264	8
Watch Dogs	245	8
Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate	249	6

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Wolfenstein: The New Order	245	8
Wolfenstein: The Old Blood	258	8
WWE 2K15	252	4
WWE 2K16	264	5

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007 Legends	225	4
2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil	244	6
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	8
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	7
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	7
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	5
Afro Samurai	177	6
After Burner Climax	193	9
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	7
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	4
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	5
Age Of Booty	172	8
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	5
Alice: Madness Returns	207	6
Alien Breed: Impact	196	8
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	8
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	6
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	4
Aliens Vs Predator	189	7
All Zombies Must Die!	214	6
Alone In The Dark	173	7
Alpha Protocol	193	8
Army	215	1
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	7
Ape Escape	208	5
Aquapazza: Aquapuls Dream Match	239	7
Aqua Panic	193	6
Arcana Heart 3	207	7
Armageddon Riders	207	6
Armored Core: For Answer	173	6
Armored Core 4	153	6
Armored Core V	217	6
Army Of Two	164	8
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	6
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	4
Assassin's Creed	161	5
Assassin's Creed II	186	9
Assassin's Creed III	225	7
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	9
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	7
Assassin's Creed: Rogue	251	7
Asura's Wrath	216	7
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	6
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	7
Backbreaker	193	7
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	7
The Baoning	210	7
Band Hero	187	6
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	8
Batman: Arkham City	211	9
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	8
Battle Fantasia	176	7
Battlefield 1943	182	9
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	8
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	9
Battlefield 3	212	8
Battleship	219	4
Bayonetta*	187	9
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	9
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	7
Beat Sketcher	201	8
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	8
Beyond: Two Souls	236	7
Binary Domain	216	7
Bionic Commando	179	8
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	8
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	6
BioShock	172	9
BioShock 2	189	8

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Street Fighter V	9
The Witness	10
Lego Marvel's Avengers	6
This War Of Mine: The Little Ones	7
Firewatch	6
Unravel	7
Naruto Shippuden Ultimate Ninja Storm 4	8
Sébastien Loeb Rally Evo	5
Not A Hero	6

JUST A SCORE

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GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
BioShock Infinite	230	9
BlackSite	163	4
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	5
BlaZBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	8
BlaZBlue: Continuum Shift	198	9
Blazing Angels	151	5
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	6
Blitz: The League II	172	6
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	6
Blur	193	8
Bodycount	210	5
Bombberman Ultra	185	8
Borderlands	185	8
Borderlands 2	223	9
Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel	250	6
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	7
Braid	188	9
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	8
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	7
Brütal Legend	185	7
Bulletstorm	203	8
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	5
Burnout Crash	211	7
Burnout Paradise	162	6
Burn Zombie Burn	178	6
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	8
Buzz! Quiz World	188	7
Calling All Cars	155	8
Call Of Duty 3	151	5
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	6
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	9
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	9
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	8
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	9
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	8
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	8
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	8
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	3
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	7
Castle Crashers	200	9
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	7
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	9
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	8
Carnival Island	213	5
Catan	195	8
Cars 2	208	6
The Cave	230	7
Catherine	215	6
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	8
Child Of Eden	211	8
Chime Super Deluxe	203	8
Civilization Revolution	168	9
Clash Of The Titans	193	6
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	6
The Club	163	8
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	9
Colin McRae: DIRT 2	184	8
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	6
Commander's Challenge	185	6
Command & Conquer	175	4
Conan	160	7
Condemned 2	165	7
Costume Quest	199	7
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	9
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	3
Create	199	7
Critter Crunch	188	9
Cross Edge	182	5
Crystal Defenders	184	4
Crysis 2	204	7
Crysis 3	230	6
Cubix HD	207	7
The Cursed Crusade	211	4
Damnation	181	3
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	3
Dance Dance Revolution	201	5
Dante's Inferno	189	8
Dark Mist	164	5

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
The Darkness	154	9
The Darkness II	215	7
Dark Sector	165	6
Dark Souls	211	9
Dark Souls II	242	9
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	8
Dark Void	188	8
Darksiders	188	8
Darksiders II	221	8
DC Universe Online	202	8
de Blob 2	203	6
Dead Or Alive 5	223	7
Dead Island	210	7
Dead Island: Riptide	231	6
Dead Rising 2	197	8
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	6
Dead Space	172	9
Dead Space 2	201	9
Dead Space 3	228	7
Dead Space: Extraction	203	8
Dead Space: Ignition	199	4
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	6
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	8
Deadpool	233	6
DeathSpank	195	8
Def Jam: Icon	151	6
Def Jam Rapstar	199	7
Defiance	231	5
Demon's Souls	193	9
Destroy All Humans: Path Of The Furon	178	2
Derrick The Deathfin	227	7
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	9
Devil May Cry 4	163	9
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	8
Diablo III	235	9
DIRT 3	206	8
DIRT Showdown	219	7
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	8
Dishonored	224	9
Disney Infinity	235	8
DJ Hero	186	9
DJ Hero 2	198	8
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	3
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	6
Double Dragon Neon	224	4
DmC Devil May Cry	227	9
Dragon Age: Origins	186	8
Dragon Age II	203	6
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	4
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	6
Dragon's Crown	235	8
Dragon's Dogma	218	8
Driver: San Francisco	209	7
Duke Nukem Forever	207	3
D&D: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	8
Dungeon Siege III	206	8
Dust 514	233	5
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	5
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	4
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	4
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	7
EA Sports Active 2	200	8
EA Sports MMA	198	8
Eat Lead	178	3
echochrome	169	8
echochrome II	202	8
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	6
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	9
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	9
Elfunk	170	4
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	7
Enchanted Arms	152	6
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	8
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	5
Eternal Sonata	176	8
Euforia	212	8
Everybody's Golf 5	158	8
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	9

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Explodemon	203	7
Eye Of Judgment	159	6
EyePet	185	8
F1 2012	223	7
F1 Race Stars	226	6
FaceBreaker	170	5
Fairy Fencer F	250	4
Fallout 3	173	10
Fallout: New Vegas	198	8
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	3
Far Cry 2	172	7
Far Cry 3	226	8
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	8
Fat Princess	183	6
FEAR	151	8
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	8
FEAR 3	208	6
FIFA 13	223	8
FIFA 14	236	9
FIFA Street (2012)	217	7
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	9
The Fight	199	4
Fight Night Champion	203	8
Fight Night Round 3	151	8
Fight Night Round 4	181	8
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	8
Final Fantasy XIII	190	8
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	8
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	8
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	5
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	5
Flight Control HD	158	8
Flock!	179	7
Folklore	158	6
Front Mission Evolved	198	5
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	5
From Dust	211	8
Fuel	180	4
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	6
Fuse	232	7
Game Of Thrones	220	3
Gaiking Gears	207	6
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	3
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	8
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	6
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	8
GI Joe	183	2
The Godfather	151	3
The Godfather II	178	4
God Of War III	190	9
God Of War: Ascension	230	9
God Of War Collection*	188	9
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	7
The Golden Compass	162	3
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	6
Gotham City Imposters	216	7
Gran Turismo 5	200	8
Gran Turismo 6	239	8
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	9
Grand Theft Auto V	236	10
Greed Corp	191	7
Grid 2	232	7
Grid Autosport	246	6
GTT Club+	174	7
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	9
Guardians Of Middle-earth	227	7
Guitar Hero III	160	9
Guitar Hero 5	184	8
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	6
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	7
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	8
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	6
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	7
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	9
Gundemonium Collection	197	8

Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece, the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.

TOP TEN PLAYSTATION ICONS



1 Nathan Drake



2 PaRappa The Rapper



3 Crash Bandicoot



4 Kratos



5 Solid Snake



6 Sackboy



7 Dante



8 Ratchet



9 Toro



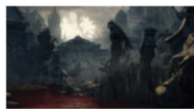
10 Cole McGrath

*denotes import review

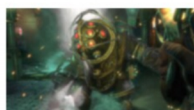
PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



TENSION
PLAY: RAINBOW SIX SIEGE
We maintain that Siege is one of the most intense games you can get on PS4 right now – not in the ‘everything is exploding’ way but in the ‘there’s only one of us left on each team and one shot will win it’ way.



GREATHATS
PLAY: BLOODBORNE: THE OLD HUNTERS
If you love *Bloodborne*, then you won't be disappointed by *The Old Hunters* DLC. For connoisseurs of headwear, it also happens to have some top-tier hats in it. We quite like the Old Hunter Top Hat.



TWISTS
PLAY: BIOSHOCK
Twists can often be a cheap narrative device, but not when they are used well. The first (and best) *Bioshock* game is a prime example of a title that does just that.



SHENMUE
PLAY: YAKUZA 5
Until *Shenmue III* comes out in 2017, the *Yakuza* games are about as close as you're going to get to playing a *Shenmue* game. They are also quite good – *Yakuza 5* scored a 9 back in issue 264.



RHYTHM-ACTION
PLAY: SUPERBEAT XONIC
This old-school rhythm-action game takes the genre back to its button-based roots. If you like a challenge, we guarantee it will deliver on that front. The soundtrack is also pretty good, particularly *Que Siga La Rumba*.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Gunstar Heroes	181	8
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	6
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	3
Haze	167	6
Heavenly Sword	157	7
Heavy Rain	189	9
Heavy Weapon	187	7
Heroes Over Europe	184	4
Hitman: Absolution	225	9
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	7
Homefront	203	6
The House Of The Dead 4	218	8
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	7
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	5
Hustle Kings	190	8
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	2
I Am Alive	217	6
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	210	9
The Incredible Hulk	168	5
inFamous	180	8
inFamous 2	207	8
Inferno Pool	181	8
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	8
Inversion	220	4
Iron Man	166	5
Iron Man 2	193	5
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	8
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	5
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	6
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	6
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle	244	8
Journey	216	9
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	7
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	6
Just Cause 2	190	8
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	7
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	7
Katamari Forever	184	8
Kick-Ass: The Game	194	6
Killer Is Dead	235	7
Killzone 2	176	9
Killzone 3	202	8
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	8
Kingdom Hearts 2.5 HD ReMIX	252	9
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	7
The King Of Fighters XII	182	7
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	8
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	2
Kung Fu Rider	196	6
Lair	158	5
LA Noire	206	9
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	9
The Last Guy	171	9
Last Rebellion	191	4
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	5
Legendary	173	6
Lego Batman	173	6
Lego Batman 2	221	8
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	7
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	6
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	7
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	7
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	7
Lego Rock Band	187	8
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	7
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	8
Lego The Lord Of The Rings	227	7
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	2
Limbo	209	9
LittleBigPlanet	172	9
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	10
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	8
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	7
London 2012	221	4
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	6
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	5
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	4
Lost Planet 2	192	8
Lost Planet 3	236	5
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	6
Lumines Supernova	178	9
Madagascar 3	224	3
Madden NFL 12	209	8
Madden NFL 13	223	8
Madden NFL Arcade	188	5
Mad Riders	220	7
Mafia II	196	8

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
MAG	189	6
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	8
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	7
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	7
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	9
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	8
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	6
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	6
Max Payne 3	219	7
Mass Effect 2	201	10
Mass Effect 3	216	9
Medal Of Honor	198	8
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	8
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	7
Mega Man 9	172	7
Mega Man 10	192	8
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	7
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	9
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	9
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	9
Metro: Last Light	231	6
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	5
Microbot	202	5
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	8
Mindjack	202	3
Minecraft	240	9
Mini Ninjas	184	8
Mirror's Edge	173	7
MLB: The Show 14	245	9
ModNation Racers	192	8
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	9
Mortal Kombat	205	8
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	6
MotoGP 13	233	7
Motorhead	173	6
MotorStorm	151	9
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	7
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	9
Mud: FM Motocross Championship	217	5
MX Vs ATV Alive	206	4
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	6
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	6
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	5
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	8
Naughty Bear	195	6
NBA 2K12	211	8
NBA 2K13	224	8
NBA Jam	200	6
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	6
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	9
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	9
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	8
Need For Speed Shift	184	8
Need For Speed: The Run	213	6
Need For Speed Underground	173	7
NeverDead	215	3
Nier	192	6
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	8
NHL 12	210	7
NHL 13	223	7
NIGHTS Into Dreams...	224	7
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	8
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	8
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	6
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	8
Noby Noby Boy	177	8
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	8
Nucleus	155	8
Okami HD	225	9
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	6
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	7
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	7
The Orange Box	161	9
Outland	207	7
OutRun Online Arcade	180	8
Overlord II	181	6
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	9
Pain	183	6
Payday: The Heist	213	8
Payday 2	235	8
Peggle	189	9
Persona 4 Arena Ultimax	250	9
PES 2012	210	7
PixelJunk 4am	220	4

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
PixelJunk Eden	169	6
PixelJunk Shooter	187	9
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	9
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	7
PixelJunk Racers	160	7
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	8
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	5
Poker Night 2	232	5
Portal 2	205	10
Prince Of Persia	174	8
Prince Of Persia: Classic	173	6
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*denotes import review

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING...

Watch out! Games!

WHAT (have they been playing?)
Tom Clancy's The Division
WHY (was it chosen?)
It's Destiny, only set in New York

LUKE ALBIGES

I'VE BEEN HOPING that *The Division* would be good ever since that first exciting reveal and even though it took its sweet time getting here, I got my wish. It's tight, it's interesting and it's great fun with a good group, plus there are a lot of elements and mechanics that clearly riff on those from some of my favourite games of recent times – there's a hell of a lot of *Destiny* in there, for instance, and the crafting and re-rolling of items feels like it fell straight out of *Diablo III*. I've only just to hit the endgame at the time of writing, so I'm hoping that it won't be as content-starved as *Destiny* was at launch. But hey, even if it is, I can just self it for a bit, play something else (read: *Final Fantasy XIV*, send help) and then return to the Big Apple when each wave of new content hits. If Ubisoft can nail the long game, I'll be on board for the duration.

WHAT (have they been playing?)
Street Fighter V
WHY (was it chosen?)
It's time to learn how to fight

PAUL WALKER-EMIG

AFTER DABBLING WITH the fighting genre with *Mortal Kombat X*, I've decided to give it another shot with *Street Fighter V*. My ambition: to not be rubbish. After making my way into Super Bronze a few days after picking up the game, things aren't going too badly. Can I climb even higher up the rankings in the weeks to come? Probably not, but I'll give it a go anyway.



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